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# Gertrude Stein and the Destruction of the Subject

by

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# *Abstract*

This project tracks the development of the subject in three major works by Gertrude Stein: *Three Lives*, *The Geographical History of America*, and *Ida*. In these texts, Stein struggles with the problem of subjectivity as both essential and already inscribed. While the subject cannot be separate from the symbolic world, the subject struggles to escape forces of subjection in order to exist more fully and wholly in-itself. In attempting to carve out a space where her characters may escape subjectivation, Stein's texts as well as her characters often become discombobulated and nonsensical. However, fragmentation is not accidental but, rather, purposeful because it countermands the rationalist and objectivist demands of modernist aesthetics by enabling textual and subjective spontaneity.

Employing feminist and post-structuralist critical approaches, this dissertation deals with two competing limits of Stein's writing: social ideology and the personal, phenomenological, and (possibly) inviolable self. These approaches enable a recuperation of the complex forces at work in Stein's time and in her writing because they look at what Spivak calls "the mechanisms of centering" ("In a Word" 162). However, to get at Stein's representation of a self that breaks with social and historical classifications, I draw on Merleau-Ponty's ideas about the intentional body and the phenomenological horizon in order to show that *Ida* pursues the possibility of a neutralized ontology. This being sheds all traces of social classification and sexualization, existing as an impersonal

singularity rather a totalized cipher for ideology and discourse. Ultimately, I argue that Stein near-destroys the subject, and with it the forces of its subjugation, in order to get back the self.

## *Dedication*

*To Nguyen Duc Mien and Le Thi Bo, my parents, whose love and sacrifices made possible for me words, knowledge, and freedom.*

# *Acknowledgements*

This project would not have come into fruition without the incisive comments from and tireless input of Dr. Bradley Bucknell, whose humanity inspires me to be a better writer and a better teacher. I thank Dr. Edward Bishop and Dr. Jo-Ann Wallace for their humour and keen insights. Dr. Robert Burch posed questions that enabled me to see the horizon from the sky. And, Dr. Lisa Ruddick's intellectual generosity reminds me of all that is good in the discipline.

**Table of Contents** **Page**

Introduction: Stein in Context 1-44

*Three Lives*: "Loving in this Way to Wander" 45-88

*The Geographical History of America*: "Not Solve but Be in It" 89-116

*Ida*: "Who is Careful?" 117-152

Conclusion: "Teach them Disobedience" 153-170

Bibliography 171-200

## *Introduction: Stein in Context*

Modernism seeks to render through formal aesthetics its disillusionment with the decaying, modern world and to achieve through art a form of consciousness that is neither rationalistic nor solipsistic. Modernists from Ford, to Pound, Joyce, Lewis, Woolf, Eliot, Richardson, and Stein created poetic forms for understanding social relationships and the individual's relationship to him/herself. Although they vocally rejoiced in distancing themselves from the nineteenth-century, they insisted on "making it new" not simply to shock or to differentiate themselves from their historical predecessors but, rather, to re-inscribe the relationship between the self, language, and the world. *Remembrance of Things Past* (1913-27), *Tender Buttons* (1914), *Pilgrimage* (1915-38), *Ulysses* (1922), *The Waves* (1931), and *Four Quartets* (1936-42), all prototypical modernist texts, strive to embody a critical knowledge of their age while maintaining fundamentally different tones, styles, subjects, techniques, and representations of self and consciousness. This is why Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane argue that modernism is about "a problem in the making of structures, the employment of language, the uniting of form, finally in the social meaning of the artist himself" (29).

Literary modernism, operating on a program of "shock, the violation of expected continuities, the element of decreation and crisis," brings to the forefront the problem of the limits of language, the autonomy of the subject, and the possibility of knowledge (Bradbury and McFarlane 24). This vague delineation of modernism is deliberate because, for the moment, it affords a re-consideration of these three epistemic problems which were transformational and transformed at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. While Pound, Woolf, Lewis, Ford, and Stein all posit axiomatic breaks with prior generations, their rhetoric of literary and cultural discontinuity conveniently obscures their adoption of Romantic and Symbolist ideas about language, the self, and knowledge. In structuring this conversation about modernist inheritances along the lines of transformations of ideas about language, subjectivity, and knowledge, I aim to establish that Gertrude Stein's writing does indeed belong to her era.[1] However, the criteria for understanding her poetics necessitates following a different branch of the family tree.

This tree begins with Wordsworth. Wordsworth's "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads* (1800) asserts that poetry and "the feeling therein developed gives importance to the action and situation and not the action and situation to the feeling," reversing the assumption that poetry should confirm the moral platitudes of society (242). For Wordsworth, poetry should guide and elevate human character rather than follow the principles of the day. He also insists on the interdependence of style and psychology so that poetical style reveals emotional states of mind as well as the poet's personality. Poetical style is the costume of personality and its task is "to follow the fluxes and refluxes of the mind when agitated by the great and simple affections of our nature" (241).

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[1] For a reading of Stein as postmodern, see Ellen E. Berry's *Curved Thought and Textual Writing: Gertrude Stein's Postmodernism* (Ann Arbor: University Press of Michigan, 1992).

For Wordsworth, language contains the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings," feelings that are organized by the act of contemplation and reflection (240).[2] Coleridge, too, says that poetry has "the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature, and the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colours of imagination" (*Biographia Literaria* 145). Language has the dual task of revealing an immediate, experiencing consciousness and transcending the solipsism of this consciousness. Through language, the self is restored to harmony with nature and men.

Both poets exalt the "primary laws of our nature" and pastoral wholeness, calling for a naturalness of poetic language as the common denominator of man (Wordsworth 239). In the "Preface" of *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth claims to use "the real language of men," positing the "nakedness and simplicity" of his style against the extravagant and absurd ones of his predecessors (235, 257). Wordsworth's ideal that poetry should be relevant to all classes of people prefigures Eliot's insistence in "The Social Function of Poetry" that "emotions and feelings, then, are best expressed in the common language of the people—that is, in the language common to all classes" (*Selected Prose* 8). However, the similarities between them are superficial. Eliot's version of a "language common to all classes" is mythic in scope and ironic in tone. That is to say, Eliot's modernist poetics speaks to the anxieties and fragmentation of modern life rather than of the organic harmony between man and nature.

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[2] Jerome McGann notes that this idea is more valid in the works of Wordsworth and Coleridge than Keats and Byron. He argues that the figure of the passive, contemplating poet-dreamer is an early form of Romanticism that was rewritten by Byron's nihilism and despair after 1807. McGann delineates three phases of Romantic ideologies in order to analyze and reconcile their contradictions and heterogeneous motivations. See *The Romantic Ideology: A Critical Investigation* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1983, 109-110). However, Alberta Gerard still maintains in *English Romantic Poetry: Ethos, Structure, and Symbol in Coleridge, Wordsworth, Shelley, and Keats* that there is a guiding principle in Romantic poetry and it is "the process of expansion and contraction" of the soul (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968, 118).

It is Poe who challenges the "*siècle infatué de lui-même*" (the self-infatuated age) of Romanticism, according to Baudelaire, and whose skepticism about the relationship between language and the self brings about an analytical poetics (*Selected Writings on Art and Artists* 192). Forty-six years after Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads*, Edgar Allen Poe countermands the idea of "spontaneous overflow" in his "The Philosophy of Composition." Poe maintains that writing is a careful labour, and its meticulous rationalizations construct a sustaining unity; he states that originality "must be elaborately sought" (*Essays* 21). The emotional unity of "The Raven" (1845), he explains of his own work, was painstaking, beginning with a decision about its length, its theme of the "beautiful Lorraine," its tone of sadness, its refrain, and its rhythm (*Essays* 14-20). Poe reverses the equation that the poetical self gives meaning to literature. Instead, the internal coherence of literature discloses a poetical personality. Moreover, his sense that literature is valuable because of its aesthetic and emotional effect on the reader, and not its "enforcement of truth," was a marked shift from conventional Romantic ideas about literature as a pedagogical vehicle (Winters 385).

Poe represents for Baudelaire an originality that stems from the manner in which a subject is presented rather than the subject matter itself. Baudelaire says of Poe: "*je trouvai, croyez moi, si vous voulez, des poèmes et des nouvelles dont j'avais eu la pensée, mais vague et confuse, mal ordonée, et que Poe avait su combiner et mener à la perfection*" (cited in Duquette 20). Poe's most influential idea for Baudelaire, and Mallarmé as well, was his reconciliation of dualisms in art, that of turgid analysis and impressionable sensation, beauty and homeliness. Poe argues that "truth, in fact, demands a precision, and Passion, a *homeliness* (the truly passionate will comprehend me) which are absolutely antagonistic to that Beauty which, I maintain, is the excitement, or pleasurable elevation, of the soul" (*Essays* 16). Thus, he gave Baudelaire and Mallarmé license to reject realism and naturalism, or the supposed harmony between the self and nature, enabling them to conceptualize the independence of art (Clements 28).

Baudelaire's "Le Peintre de la vie moderne" (1859) cements the transformation of the eighteenth-century self into a modern flanêur. In conceptualizing the modern man as a hypersensitive receptor of chaotic social, cultural, and political transformations of his age, Baudelaire renovates the modern artist into someone who does not turn the world into a sublime, moral truth but, rather, someone who must render "*le circonstance et de tout ce qu'elle suggère d'éternel*" (*Oeuvres Complète* 1156). Baudelaire counters the Romantic self, an attentive ego that organizes the chaos of the world, with the decadent dandy, or someone who lives and experiences all the beauty and follies of the world and who, in an age of democratic and monarchic instability, "*est le dernier éclate d'heroisme dans les décadences*" (*Oeuvres Complète* 1179). In the figure of the dandy, Baudelaire formulates a new art out of a new subjectivity.

Baudelaire overturns both Wordsworth and Coleridge's belief that the artist is a mind removed from sensations and immediate perceptions. His modernity, that which is "*le transitoire, le fugitive, le contingent,*" gives rise to art that is "*l'éternel et l'immuable*" (*Oeuvres Complète* 1163). Art and life are not separate, but art is not a reproduction of life. They are two parts of the whole constituting the ontology of the modern, but art, nevertheless, renders life more fully by creating temporal and cultural "correspondences" that are otherwise unregistered or forgotten by the crowd. The chaos of the world is an allegory for Baudelaire: "*Vieux faubourgs, tout pour moi devient allégorie,*"[3] leading Benjamin to declare that "Baudelaire's genius, which is nourished on melancholy, is an allegorical genius" (*Arcades* 10). Through allegory, Baudelaire is able to create "*l'idéal.*" Baron Haussman's Paris fed Baudelaire's sensibility about modern urban decay and Baudelaire's poetry, his "spleen," allegorized the pessimism of modern life and art into something which transcends the horrors of the city. Benjamin contends that the reviled corpus of the city, the crowd, is "imprinted on [Baudelaire's] creativity as a hidden figure," as a phantasm of the poet's abjection ("On Some Motifs in Baudelaire" 165). He continues to comment that "the mass was the agitated veil; through it Baudelaire saw Paris" (168). The experience of the city becomes the poet's basis for recovering an authentic self, but one that is highly aestheticized and ironical, both a part of the degenerate city and exiled from it through art. This, then, is the generative model that later sways Eliot and Pound, but not, importantly, Woolf and Stein.[4]

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[3] Baudelaire, "Le Cynge." *Complete Poems*. Trans. Walter Martin. New York: Routledge, 2002, 228.

Stéphane Mallarmé, Baudelaire's contemporary, also attempts to give new forms to modernity. His particular emphasis is a poetics of "pure symbolism, of pure revelation untouched by language's contingent being, unsullied by the necessities of daily usage" (Thiher 11). He locates the problem of modernity in terms of language rather than in an ambivalent self. He states, "If the poem is to be pure, the poet's voice must be stilled and the initiative taken by the words themselves, which will be set in motion as they meet unequally in motion" (*Selected Prose* 40). The physical world, then, is usurped by a language of complete non-referentiality and abstruseness. The subtle transformations in poetic relationships to language from Wordsworth to Baudelaire and Mallarmé are crucial to my understanding of modernism because they reveal two distinct strains: the first is a belief in the sequence of self→meaning→world; the second is a belief in the erasure of self in order to obtain word→autonomy→world. Whereas Wordsworth begins with the self in order to give meaning to the world, Baudelaire straddles self and world in order to render meaning. Mallarmé, on the other hand, sets into motion the second sequence. His desire for the great Book, an impossibility since its realization would mean the erasure of socially-given meaning and thus the absence of all understanding, represents the conviction that language, not the self, must perform the destruction of modern degeneration.

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[4] For example, In *Sexual/Textual Politics*, Toril Moi argues that Woolf's multiple "I" in *A Room of One's Own* challenges the universalized concept of an essential human identity and her representations of subjectivity "radically undermine the notion of the unitary self" that sustain masculine versions of modernism (7).

Wordsworth, Baudelaire, and Mallarmé represent different approaches to language and literature, despite their individual realisms, which frame the discourse of modernism and give meaning to its contradictions and dissention. While Baudelaire reverses Wordswordian valorization of pastoral greatness to found an urban aesthetics, he is still engaged with the search for an authentic self. Mallarmé veers from this pursuit and focuses his poetic energies entirely on achieving a "pure" language. In "Coleridge, Baudelaire, and Modernist Poetics," M. H. Abrams argues that Mallarmé's aesthetic is one which helps to shift "the focus . . . from the poet, regarded . . . as expressing a revelation to his fellow-men, to the poem, regarded as existing in total self-sufficiency as an end in itself" (130). This being said, the shift from formulating an authentic self to an authentic language does not eradicate the gendered politics of all three male progenitors. The pursuit of a true self and a pure language is based on the assumption of a superior masculine self as well as on notions of truth and purity. As much as Wordsworth, Baudelaire, Mallarmé, and, later, Eliot conceive of the active, masculine self as under attack by various social, historical, and political ideologies, this self still has recourse to an authority that is tied to transcendence and art.

Eliot's critical irony and pastiche exemplify this masculine tradition. Through irony and self-deprecation, Eliot is able to objectify the self as something that is both under and on the attack, and, as a result, the self is able maintain unequal gender binaries. In *The Waste Land*, Eliot explicitly recovers Baudelaire's modern subject who can only ground his connection to other masculine subjects through disgust and abuse ("You! hypocrite lecteur!—mon semblable,—mon frère!"[5]). Conversely, for Eliot, the self's connection to feminine subjects is primarily sexual, and the objectification of women in his poetry works to sustain a superior, masculine, artistic self. This masculine self is individual and yet impersonal. The former is a carry-over from Romantic ideals about the poet as a fundamental source of creativity. The latter, the idea of impersonality, is directly traceable to Mallarmé's notion that the "inner structures of a book of verse must be inborn; in this way, chance will be totally eliminated and the poet will be absent" (*Selected Prose* 41).[6] Eliot reconciles Baudelarian content and Mallarméan form by pressing for a language steeped in literary tradition and human civilizations. This is precisely what Stein cannot do because tradition, in general, and literary tradition, specifically, disallows any authentic, authoritative engagement with language and knowledge for women (Showalter x).

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[5] T. S. Eliot. "The Waste Land." *Collected Poems*. London: Faber and Faber, 1974, 65.

[6] While Baudelaire also speaks of the dandy's critical distance from the mire of the modern world, he does not point us to a poetics of impersonality. The "I" is always very present in his poetry. Eliot also may have taken from Mallarmé the idea of the profundity of the wasteland. In "Crisis in Poetry," Mallarmé refers to Victor Hugo's poetic powers creating a "wasteland" where poetry could "fly off, freely scattering its numberless and irreducible elements" (34-35).

Woolf, Dorothy Richardson, and H. D. attempted to recover the complexities of women's psychic lives in order to reverse the masculine objectification of symbolic and real women. They were, however, marginalized and regarded as amateurs. Ford, for example, making the distinction between novels, where "unity of form, culminations and shapes . . . [and] every word—*every word*—must be one that carries the story forward to its appointed end," and romances that contain "digressions, moralizations and lectures," classifies Woolf's writing as romance because she "records passionlessly the mental attitudes, the house furnishings, and the current literature of the intellectual governing class . . . which is all ado about nothing" ("Review" 73, 74-5). In *Men Without Art*, Wyndham Lewis disgustedly notes that the feminization of art has "suffocated" and strangled the "erection" of artistic criteria (337).[7] Thus, hegemonic modernism "derives its force from a repudiation of the feminine" only to reinstall its control of representations of the feminine-other (Nicholls 197).

Revisions to the idea of the self and intersubjective experiences from Wordsworth through to Eliot have a share in a shifting and fluid articulation of what is feminine and monstrous in order to authorize new versions of the masculine self and language (Huyssen 49). The irony of Baudelaire's hatred of woman, Nicholls points out, is his need for her as his unwanted double, a double that reminds him of his own failure to transcend the physical world (62). This is the crux of the problem for those following in Baudelaire's path. French Symbolists at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries overcame the paradox of Baudelaire's conflicted, masculine self by turning to Mallarmé's emphasis on the absolute autonomy of words. When language is "pure" and liberated from its contamination by the masses, social constraints on the poet and language are voided. However, the desire to transcend society must be seen in light of a persistently gendered (and, as we will later see, racialized) discourse about art, identity, and authority that underlie the formation of artistic programs, movements, and communities from Wordsworth through to Baudelaire and canonical modernists.

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[7] He includes Joyce and Yeats in his description of "the feminine mind" (337). However, Teresa de Lauretis argues that Joyce and other male modernists construct female subjects through a form of ventriloquism and thereby further maintain control over representations of the feminine (see "Strategies of Coherence: The Poetics of Film Narrative" *Reading Narrative: Form, Ethics, Ideology*. Ed. James Phelan. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1989, 188).

The characterization of art and language as masculine has legitimized the shape of modernist art in England and the United States. Pound, Ford, and Eliot's rejection of W. B. Yeats and his search for symbols to open up poetry to the mystical and the occult draws from a rhetoric of sexual difference that Christine Battersby traces back to Greek myths (8). Yeats argues that Symbolism is a method of evocation and submission to trance-like states.[8] He conceives of poetical symbols as a gateway to a transcendental and non-mechanical realm of being. In "The Philosophy of Shelley's Poetry," he contends that "it is only by ancient symbols, by symbols that have numberless meanings besides the one or two the writer lays emphasis upon, or the half-score he knows of, that any highly subjective art can escape from the barrenness and shallowness of a too conscious arrangement, into the abundance and depth of Nature" (*Essays* 87). However, Pound and Eliot had no truck with this subjectivistism because it was unscientific and solipsistic, and Ford calls it womanly (Levenson 114).

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[8] This is different from French Symbolism, and Mallarmé, especially. Though he champions the "mysterious" and the "ineffable," he speaks of these in terms of a meaning which eludes signification rather than another realm of existence (*Selected Prose* 39).

Ford derides the earlier Yeats for producing illusions and fantasies, and advocates, instead, a "civic realism" which commands that the artist has a responsibility to the social and factual world. But, he himself subsequently degenerates into a radical subjectivism, positing a self that is no longer obligated to society because the artist must "register a truth as he sees it" (cited in Levenson 115). In the early phase of modernism, Ford's investment in a self who deals in immediate perceptions resembles the exultant Romantic ego without the reliance on heroic meaning and organic wholeness. The artist's "value is in his temperament," writes Ford, and he should therefore not deal in facts (cited in Levenson 60). Ford's impressionism, which Pound admired, being sometimes "objective" and sometimes "subjective," reveals the shiftiness of modernist polemics about aesthetics, identity, and culture.

Hulme, as an interesting contrast to Ford, rejects egoism and impressionism because of their unseemly solipsism. While Hulme adopts Bergson's *durée réelle* as a counterpoint to the standardizations of modern life in 1907, he is dissatisfied with this explanation by 1910 because of its similarities with humanist Romanticism (Levenson 39, 86). In Romanticism's place, he embraces classicism and its focus on order and tradition, attacking writing that is engrossed by sensations and impressions. Classicism valorizes form above all else and de-emphasizes the idea of an immediate correspondence between word and world. Hulme's classicism, like those of Moréas and Pound, was a defense against the feminized subjectivism of Romanticism.

However, modernist self-constructions were shaken by the First World War, and theories that provided for complex unities beneath form became obsolete (Bucknell 12). The experience of the First World War split modernism's collective psyches and brought on an anxiety about the status and value of avant-garde art. Marshall Berman notes that "modernists can never be done with the past: they must go on forever haunted by it, digging up its ghosts, recreating it even as they remake the world and themselves" (346). Pound experienced it acutely because of the deaths and wounding of his contemporaries. He was in the process of reassessing the value and function of art when, in September 1914, he met Eliot (Levenson 134). Eliot and Pound returned the moderns to human history. Pound, while recycling Japanese Noh plays and classical Chinese poetry, turns to Gautier's "hard-edged pictorial presentation," which is grounded on Mallarmé's sense of pure form and language (Nicholls 42, 45). Eliot identifies with Baudelaire's belief in the presence of ancient civilizations in modern times.[9] Eliot and Pound saw art as an opposition to the forces propelling modernity toward increasing mechanization and standardization. Whereas Wyndham Lewis announces a dehumanization of art in 1913 with a proclamation that "Man [is] not the hero of our universe" (cited in Levenson 125), Eliot and Pound insist on human action and histories of knowledge and artistic production, or tradition and order. They also emphasize a critical approach to these so that modernist writing must strike the right note of ironic play with tradition, order, modern decay, and an abject other, thereby launching a phase of Anglo-American modernism identified by Nicholls as a "version developed in part as a *critique* of modernity" (166).[10]

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[9] For expositions on Eliot's debt to Baudelaire, which includes all the versions and interpretations of Baudelaire from Swinburne to Gautier and Apollinaire, and also his adoption of Mallarmé, see Patricia Clement's *Baudelaire and the English Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985).

In this brief literary history I am not arguing a case of strict influence. I am, instead, interested in accounting for the divergent views of some major figures in modernism in relation to Stein. She does not reconcile herself with Baudelairian cityscapes, selfhood, or intersubjectivity because these are explicitly masculine.[11] While Baudelaire does not give birth to the denigration of the feminine, his aesthetics depends upon "othering" the feminine figure in order to sustain the authority of the masculine artist. This is the nub of Stein's difference from mainstream modernism. While Eliot and Pound inherited the Baudelarian city as a dark, psychic state of threatening female forces, Stein offers us a way out this signifying dilemma. For Stein, the city is not a degenerate, sullied femininity that the artist must overcome in order to affirm herself. She does away with the rhetoric of gothic horror, and thus the abjection of the unknowable feminine-other. The city is a living text with more combinations and distributions, temporalities and personalities than those allowed in the canon. The city's urban fragmentation and bourgeois spectacles offer Stein an aesthetic formulation without the dualisms of active/male artist vs. passive/female object.

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[10] In France, however, Gide and Apollinaire were busy shedding themselves of the stultifying Decadent melancholia in order to create an "ecstatic" modernism (Nicholls 166). While Decadents had internalized Baudelaire's melancholia and pessimism about the "unreal city" without recuperating his transformation of the deadening world into a glorious art, Gide and Apollinaire celebrate the pleasures of the body and sexual freedom. This form of ecstatic modernism seemingly embraces the once denigrated body, the sign of the feminine. However, with this came a reconfiguration of the meaning of the repulsive feminine "other."

[11] The indictment of Stein's "masculism," that is, her identification with masculinity as a superior subjectivity, is as complicated as her identification with anti-Semitism. However, as Harriet Chessman, and others, argues "Stein often makes it possible to imagine male or female speakers within either masculine or feminine modes of language" (see *The Public is Invited to Dance: Representation, the Body, and Dialogue in Gertrude Stein*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989, 6).

Part of her poetics can be traced back to Mallarmé and his radical isolation of language. Stein's uncompromising non-referentiality (in *Tender Buttons* or *Stanzas in Meditation*) and non-linearity (in *The Geographical History of America* or *Four in America*) are remarkably akin to what Mallarmé posits as chance in "Crisis in Poetry,"

> Out of a number of words, poetry fashions a single new word which is total in itself and foreign to the language—a kind of incantation. Thus the desired isolation of language is effected; and chance (which might still have governed these elements, despite their artful and alternating renewal through meaning and sound) is thereby instantly and thoroughly abolished. *Then we realize, to our amazement, that we had never truly heard this or that ordinary poetic fragment; and, at the same time, our recollection of*

> *the object thus conjured up bathes in a totally new atmosphere*. (*Selected Prose* 43 [italics mine])

Peter Nicholls's claim that in Mallarmé's poetics, "the *words* of the poem thus offer some hope of transcending for the moment the accidental and unmotivated production of meaning that characterizes *language* as a system" is also apt for Stein (37-8). She does produce texts that are exceedingly "foreign" and isolated from everyday connotations. But, on the other hand, Stein does more than apply a Mallarméan style to her writing. She refuses the valorization of esoteric words and ideas as well as the fear of "sullying" language with daily usage. She collects the accidental fragments of the world, combines them, and rejoices in their ability to re-imbue one another with linguistic and epistemological newness. She pursues a different structure of language as a basis for intersubjective experiences, one that is not based on Cartesian dualisms of mind/body, male/female, and transcendence/immanence. In other words, not only does Stein depart from Baudelairian assumptions about the identity of the artist and how he comes to authorize his genius, she also undermines the binary of sexual difference that implicitly sustains Romantic and modernist ideals of art and language as pure and unsullied.

Stein had no false modesty about proclaiming her genius, but it is noteworthy that an author so suspicious of fixed markers of identity should willingly embrace this one. Her first explicit use of the term appears in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1933) with the speaker, Alice Toklas, claiming that "the three geniuses of whom I wish to speak are Gertrude Stein, Pablo Picasso and Alfred Whitehead. I have met many important people, I have met great people but I have only known three first class geniuses" (5). The book proceeds to describe "the endless variety" of people who assembled at Stein's salon and who formed a history of the avant-garde, a history of geniuses, near geniuses, and pseudo-geniuses (123). Despite all this, "no one made any difference" and Stein "sat peacefully in a chair" (124). Stein's representation of important and near-important historical figures in this light reflects both the urgency and impotence of the artistic innovations of this era.

The First World War, the grisly backdrop for the first half of the book, "conducted" the composition of life and rendered much of what was done and said as useless in practical terms ("Composition as Explanation" 24). The only ones who made a difference, she intimates, were herself and Picasso because of their "foresight": "down the street came some big cannon, the first any of us had seen painted, that is camouflaged. Pablo stopped, he was spell-bound. C'est nous qui avons fait ça, he said, it is we that have created that, he said" (*The Autobiography* 90). Thus, while Stein mocks the widespread use of the label genius, she retains its connotations of foresight, of someone "ahead of her time."

She delimits her greatness from the rest by connecting her work with Picasso's and portraying his work as a singular transformation of twentieth-century aesthetics in his medium: "[Gertrude] said, as Pablo once remarked, when you make a thing, it is so complicated making it that it is bound to be ugly, but those who do it after you they don't have to worry about making it and they can make it pretty" (*The Autobiography* 23). But a genius is someone whose unique vision creates "the modern composition" of her time only to be ignored by her contemporaries because they are behind the times ("Composition as Explanation" 22). The central problematic for a genius is the temporal gap between the emergence of the work and the reception of the work. This time lag, a result of societal habits of taste, does not change the fact that "beauty is beauty even when it is irritating or stimulating" ("Composition as Explanation" 23). In her mind, society is "indolent," whereas a genius, in the words of William James, embodies the "faculty of perceiving in an unhabitual way" (*Principles of Psychology* 715).[12] Her representation of Picasso as her corollary in painting does more than authorize her identity as an artist or explain her writing as a cubist treatment of language; it marks and corroborates her idea of the difference between the temporality of the artist and her art and the temporality of society.

In "What are Masterpieces and Why Are There so Few of Them," Stein argues that when a writer composes, there can be no memory, or reproduction, because this changes the temporality of the composition. When there is memory, the writer composes in response to social manners and in anticipation of an audience, "so entity does not exist there are two presents instead of one and so once again creation breaks down" ("What are Masterpieces" 149). Art must have only one temporality, the time of the composition, and this time must be lived without the mediation of another temporality, or memory, because the "business of art is to live in the actual present, that is the complete actual present, and to completely express that complete actual present" ("Plays" 66).

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[12] William James was Stein's mentor at Radcliffe.

In *The Geographical History of America*, Stein observes that authentic art is produced by the human mind, rather than human nature, because the human mind exists in an absolute and perpetual present. This is one of Stein's persistent binaries, appealingly transparent but ultimately obscure. Because human nature is related to linear time and sociality, it cannot wrench itself out of social and historical continuum. Human nature has to do with resemblance, for it "resembles the nature that any human beings have. It is not necessarily it but it resembles it" (*GHA* 91). Moreover, "human nature is what any human being will do" whereas the human mind is "the way they tell what any human being has or does or may or can do" (*GHA* 68). Thus, human nature cannot speculate or work in the realm of conditionals; it is immersed in the facticity of the world and cannot be related to masterpieces because "everybody always knows everything there is to know about human nature, they exist because they came to be as something that is an end in itself and in that respect it is opposed to the business of living which is relation and necessity. That is what a master-piece is not although it may easily be what a master-piece talks about" ("What are Masterpieces" 151).

The question of human nature and the human mind relates fundamentally to the nature of knowledge and the self. While Stein's opposition between human nature and the human mind seemingly recapitulates a gendered divide between flesh and consciousness, I think she is actually attempting to understand genius, or the human mind, as a different mode of living time. Identity can be conscious only of social, historical time while the human mind, what Stein also refers to as entity, can grasp pure, continuous time because it is not concerned with "necessity" ("What are Masterpieces" 151). Genius produces art and a temporality that is unconcerned with social expectations or historical time. For Stein, genius is a "being most intensely alive, that is being one who is at the same time talking and listening" ("Portraits and Repetition" 102). The idea of "talking and listening" at the same time gestures to a temporal immediacy that orators and politicians cannot achieve because they "hear not what they are not what they say but what their audience hears them say" ("What are Masterpieces" 150). Stein seems to retain some aspect of identity which she had dismissed as irrelevant to creation, but careful reading of this and other essays reveals Stein's erasure of social identity in the creative process in order to give rise to entity and temporal wholeness.[13] In "Composition as Explanation," she also surmises that "the creator of the new composition in the arts" is an "outlaw" (22). However, the outlaw is not outside the pressures of culture; rather, the outlaw must be seen as analogous to the Steinian masterpiece because "it has to exist but it does not have to be necessary it is not in response to necessity as action is because the minute it is necessary it has in it no possibility of going on" ("What are Masterpieces" 150).

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[13] This idea is reminiscent of Eliot's demand for the artist's "continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality" but without his explicit intellectualism (*Selected Prose* 40).

Barbara Will contends in *Gertrude Stein: Modernism and the Problem of Genius* that Stein's declarations of genius were strategic: the label helped to authorize her literary career through its connotation of "timeless human originality and transcendence" (2). Stein, according to Will, thought that she was like everyone else and at the same time "more" (37). In declaring that "Picasso and Matisse have a maleness that belongs to genius. Moi aussi," she authorizes herself to do the cultural work normally associated with men (cited in Bridgman 119). Stein repudiates identifications with ethnicity and sex while arguing that Goethe and Frederick the Great could both be deemed Jewish. She also uses Otto Weininger's racist theories to shed herself of the stigma of being Jewish and a woman. Weininger's method, what he calls "the science of character," relies mostly on anecdotal evidence about those such as Sappho and George Sand, but he also formulates an early version of social constructivism, arguing that there are two "systems of education" that turn out the characters of boys and girls (Weininger 59, 57). And while he believes that women are categorically inferior, he posits that "homo-sexuality is a higher form than hetero-sexuality. . . . [H]omo-sexual or bisexual women reveal their maleness by their preference either for women or for womanish men" (66). Through Weininger's theories, Stein—who read Weininger a year after meeting Alice Toklas—could conceivably validate her sexual feelings for Alice Toklas and see herself as more male and thus avowed a social and cultural voice.

The tension between Stein's refusal of masculine poetics and her strategic adoption of a masculine identity speaks to the personal negotiations that women artists at the turn of the twentieth century were forced to undergo. Stein, like Radclyffe Hall, Janet Flanner, Djuna Barnes, assumed a role that made her "explainable" *as* unorthodox to the avant-garde community as well as society at large. However, it is impossible to ascertain whether she believed these gendered values straightforwardly; her eventual aesthetic repudiation of gender categories suggests that these and other social classifications are highly suspect.

According to Paul Peppis, Stein's early enthusiasm for Otto Weininger's "wildly popular" *Sex and Character* (1903) is not as remarkable as we would assume (375). He claims that "during the early twentieth century, typological structures pervaded western thought, shaping much of the discourse about modes of classification" (374). As a result, our understanding of Stein's treatment of gendered and racial categories, her infamous conception of "bottom natures," has to consider how her work, while inextricable from the rhetoric of typological determinism of her time,

> probe[s] these mythologies, laying bare, often aggravating the contradictory urges and ideas that animated them: if "Melanctha" traffics in racist stereotypes, it also entertains a progressive individualist critique of racialism, and begins formulating a (modernist) critique of the totalizing, hierarchical structures of discourse, character, and meaning that

> underwrite both racialism and individualism. The novella's interest and significance lies in this stylistic and ideological perplexity. (Peppis 389)

Maria Damon also concurs that Stein distorts and transforms Weininger's notoriously misogynistic and heterosexist theories through her experimentations with "verbal styles—repetition, circularity, 'imprecision,' unconventional syntactic and semantic constructions—that were despised as primitive and that were literally thought to mark the speaker or writer as less than fully human" (499). By explicitly playing with and valorizing crude, racial and gender representations, Stein deflates the modernist dream of objectivity and neutrality. In other words, she transgresses the racist codes of "polite society" by voicing and mimicking the racist clichés of her era, resulting in "a mixture of aesthetic experimentation and racist crudity" (North 235).[14] Laura Doyle, moreover, suggests that Stein "regularly picked up on such overdetermined phrases and imitated the culture's repetition of them so as to pound the meaning out of them and alert us to their inculcative power" (263). These critics attest to the ideological complexity of Stein's writing, a complexity which, I think, comes out of her very desire to deflate the coerciveness of ideology.

Thus, for Stein, the question of genius is not a question about inherently superior identities but about the role of the artist in relation to her medium and the role of art in society. She redefines the meaning of genius as a supreme, solitary self, often through a simultaneous redefinition of the autobiographical genre which is supposed to present the life of an individual self. If autobiography reports the historical truth of one's life, a static concept that Stein abhorred, Stein's proclamations of genius in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* reveal the limits of the genre as well as notions of authentic identity.[15] In explicitly taking up the idea of genius after thirty years of pursuing radical aesthetic innovations, Stein was not simply donning a masculine mask. Instead, she undercuts the Romantic and modernist idealizations of the artistic self in order to denote that it is simply another form of identity; like all identities, the artistic self is circumscribed by arbitrary social regulations. As a result, Bob Perelman notes that Stein's proclamation of genius "celebrates, but also objectifies, publicizes, and alienates herself" (146). He adds that Stein uses the term genius to connote "both a household word and a literary counter of absolute value" (146). Perelman's claim illuminates an interesting result of Stein's varied treatments of the idea of genius. Ultimately, she destabilizes the idea of genius as a transcendent value and supreme identity and blurs the boundaries of "inherent" identities.

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[14] North, unlike Damon and Doyle, deems Stein's practice, along those of Eliot and Pound, racist in the end because her stylistic "tricks" obscure the fact that dialect arose out of the historical conditions of slavery. See *The Dialect of Modernism: Race, Language and the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994) 11.

Genius, as Carl Pletsch points out, "is not a natural category. The genius is a subcategory of the author, a function in a historically specific discourse" dating back to the mid-eighteenth-century (161). He further observes that the category

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[15] Shirley Neuman, for instance, contends that Stein's first autobiography is about "both the genre and its criticism" (*Gertrude Stein* 60).

"emerged to replace God as the guarantor of artistic and intellectual novelty and of cultural innovation generally" (162). In other words, it has two ideological implications. In designating a superior being that renews society via his creative production, it constructs principles of greatness at the very same time that it legitimizes the inherent greatness of the individual. Wordsword stipulates genius as the ability to create the "taste by which he is to be enjoyed" (*Prose* 3: 80). This ideal follows from Kant, who asserts that genius "gives the rule to Art" (*Selections* 417). For Kant, genius cannot be learned or assumed; genius is naturally endowed and belongs to the perfection of the natural world. These assertions about artistic eminence and individual greatness, and, implicitly, ideals about a supreme, masculine self, have shaped our understanding of art and the artist; a man of genius grasps his culture and tradition and clarifies their limitations while transcending them with his originality.

Precisely because eighteenth-century ideologies about greatness connote a vital, organic individualism, modernists, following Baudelaire's subversion of Romantic valorizations of nature as absolute, original form, retain only a vague outline of the term. In "The Metaphysical Poets," Eliot pits the Romantic genius against Donne and the "analytic" aesthetic of the seventeenth-century which formed "new wholes" by combining the intellectual and reflective faculties (*Selected Prose* 63-4). Pound represents genius as someone who has mastered "the art of diagnosis and the art of cure" ("The Serious Artist" 45). For Pound, as for Eliot, the function of the artist is to perform "surgery, insertions and amputations" in order for art to "bear witness and define for us the inner nature and conditions of man" ("The Serious Artist" 44, 45). The poet must isolate himself from the commonness of the unthinking masses in order to generate art that will renew society. Greatness is determined by the ability to overcome the mob and the ignorant (Will, *Gertrude Stein* 5). Eliot, moreover, asserts that "the poet must become more and more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect, in order to force, to dislocate if necessary, language into his meaning" ("The Metaphysical Poets" 65). Eliot's version of dislocating language depends upon an authorial mastery which Stein undermines.

I bring up Romantic and modernist ideologies about genius in order to locate both Stein's renovation of the term and, presently, feminist critical projects to re-read women writers. Feminist critics reveal the gender bias of conceptualizations of genius in order to overturn Romantic poetic values that have carried-over into modernism. Modernists, in retaining the ideal of a supreme *masculine*, artistic self as autonomous, sustain a politics of sexual exclusion. It seems of no small import that Pound embraces an aesthetic that is "hard" as opposed to one that is "soft" ("The Hard and the Soft" 285).

From Romanticism onwards, argues Christine Battersby, the ideal of artistic transcendence is a symbolic and real transcendence of a degenerate, feminine other. Genius, more than an evaluative term, recapitulates a hierarchy of sexual difference that has the function of engendering "proper" social and artistic subjects. In her reading of Virginia Woolf's A *Room of One's Own*, Battersby points out that Coleridge's notion of the androgynous nature of the mind of genius spells out a privileged "psychic bisexuality" for male authors and not female authors (9). In other words, Coleridge's notion of genius as "androgyne" does not undo the sexual politic which derides women as overwrought and emotional. Rather, this notion appropriates these denigrated traits in order to afford male authors vehicles for creative transcendence. Writers like George Sand and George Eliot, argue Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, are described by their male contemporaries and, subsequently, male critics as almost male, and thus *almost* geniuses; women can never overcome their biology and inherently emotional (read hysterical) nature in order to "father" a text (*Mad Woman* 4). Measured against these evaluative and sexual standards coalesced in the Romantic period, women writers always already lack the generative capacity to be geniuses. Battersby concludes that the "Romantics' exclusion of women from culture is revealed as a re-working of older forms of sexual apartheid. Romanticism recycled a number of ancient myths that portrayed woman as outside culture, as alien and 'Other'" (8).

Gilbert and Gubar judge that this alienation necessarily engenders different "anxieties of influence" for female authors (*Mad Woman* 48). While Gilbert and Gubar are hostile to Harold Bloom's model of literary genealogy because it posits the "anxiety of influence" as a patrilineal relationship, they use the model as a heuristic in order to speculate that women experience an ontological crisis, what they term an "anxiety of authorship" (*Mad Woman* 49). In attempting any literary or cultural production, women must confront their dispossession from culture and the public sphere. This they do by publicly apologizing (Margaret Cavendish and Ann Finch) or by declaring themselves more male than female (Radclyffe Hall and George Eliot). Thus, women authors are only able to partake, if at all, in the idea of genius through humbling apologies or dis-identification with their sex (*Mad Woman* 65). The latter, I argue, is also the case for Stein's strategic "masculinist" proclamations.

Second Wave feminist readings of monolithic modernism question more than the aesthetic presumptions of an artistic era; these readings illuminate the epistemological bias of constructing human knowledge and experience solely through men's perspectives. Thus, Gilbert and Gubar posit that Stein's aesthetic looks to a "post-patriarchal future" (238) while Shari Benstock claims that Stein revolutionizes language by relinquishing "the right to make language submit to the writer's will" (159). They contend that if women could not, and, perhaps, should not, participate in the idea of transcendence through art, they produce meaningful alternatives to the convention of the solitary male genius through collaborations and "double talk" (*No Man's Land* 2: 215). Benstock notes that "modernist experiments reveal divergent attitudes toward language, one marker of which is gender: women not only experience the world differently from men, they write that experience differently" (32).

More than thirty years ago, Second Wave feminists such as Catharine Stimpson recuperated Stein as part of an effort to re-inscribe the conventions of aesthetic judgment. Stimpson's important 1977 article, "The Mind, the Body, and Gertrude Stein," develops the idea that the "nonsense" of Stein's writing encodes lesbian eroticism. Stimpson resuscitates Stein from the history of lost women writers and ushers in an important era of feminist readings of Stein's writing and its relationship to ideologies of sex, gender, race, and knowledge by celebrating Stein as a "Euclid of behavior" (498). According to Stimpson, Stein "devised several strategies" in order to live below the radar of censure but these strategies also problematically obscure the truth (495). Stein conformed to heterosexual identities in her romantic relationship with Alice Toklas (husband and wife, respectively); she avoided politically-charged or feminist circles such as Natalie Barney's Sapphic salon; she masked all signs of 'sexual deviance' in her writing (498); and, she aligned herself with (so-called) masculine traits in order to escape the negative consequences of being female. In particular, Stimpson studies Stein's life and career as an exemplary product of oppressive patriarchy.[16] She points out that Stein's early writing, such as "Ada," a portrait of Alice Toklas that is "erotic in mood, domestic in setting, and modern in linguistic style," hides behind conventional tropes and resolutions (504).

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[16] For example, Stimpson points out that in the author's lifetime, university education expanded women's intellectual and physical latitudes, but penalties remained strictly enforced against those who ignored puritanical strictures about the female body and sexuality. Stein, like many other university women of that era, navigated the historical contradictions between the reality and the polemic of freedom with varying misgivings. In her Radcliffe days, she endorsed the traditional role of women as housewives but speculated that these duties could also include teaching three times a week, performing original laboratory research, typing manuscripts, and managing lodgers and children, all with the help of one servant. To Stimpson's mind, Stein's public avowal of the 'New Housewife' ideology reproduces sexist gender divisions and perpetuates women's social, sexual, and intellectual oppression. On the other hand, it seems to me that Stein, though "insouciant in her class bias" (Stimpson, "The Mind, the Body, and Gertrude Stein" 490), understood that work included unpaid labour. As well, this early position reveals her ambivalence about the physical and mental containment of women within the domestic realm. In couching her position about the 'New Housewife' within the heterosexual status quo, Stein was able to escape censure while still prescribing the beginning of women's financial and intellectual autonomy, an utopianism that was shared by the women of her academic and social class.

Her elucidation of Stein's "double-talk" has inspired critics such Marianne DeKoven, Lisa Ruddick, and Harriet Scott Chessman to excavate Stein's subversive potential. DeKoven argues that Stein creates an *écriture feminine* that is not only anti-patriarchal but also pre-Oedipal. DeKoven valorizes Stein's writing for its subversions of language as a linear and rational operation, which is necessarily symbolic and masculine. She sees Stein's writing as "erotic in its excess" (*A Different* 16). This "excess" is a trait of the "maternal signifier" that defies the authority of the father. DeKoven also posits that Stein's move from paternal to maternal authority "is the beginning of a shift from conventional patriarchal to experimental, anti-patriarchal modes of articulated meaning" (*A Different* 28).

Ruddick's work similarly describes Stein's writing as a participant in a familial battle, albeit a familial dynamic that is haunted by "patricide" and "incest" (*Reading* 6). She argues that *The Making of the Americans* released Stein's "erotic feelings, her patriarchal rage, and her experimental daring" (*Reading* 5); her aesthetics is a rejection of William James, the nineteenth-century, patriarchal father and mentor. Ruddick, however, differs from DeKoven in that she seeks thematic patterns in the midst of Steinian incoherence in order to reconstruct an "alternative truth" (*Reading* 9). In her chapter on *Tender Buttons*, Ruddick constructs a convincing argument about Stein's recovery of a femalecentred vision that counters patriarchal narratives of violent sacrifice (*Reading* 191).

In contrast to these celebrations of the maternal, Chessman examines Stein's writing as a "poetics of dialogue" between reader, writer, narrators and characters, and language (3). She makes the counterclaim that *Three Lives* and *Ida* express the "dangers of maternal creation and authorship" because creation and authorship are cultural myths which depend upon the family narrative (19). She moreover insists that Stein differs from other women modernists, such as H. D. and Dorothy Richardson, "in her refusal to substitute a myth of purely maternal creativity for the myth of a genesis that is wholly paternal" (21). Chessman raises the hidden problematic of the *écriture feminine* model when it is applied to Stein. That is to say, in employing this model and its politics of sexual difference, critics re-inscribe Stein with a biological or discursive gender in order to interpret her textual strategies as subversive and anti-patriarchal. As a result, Chessman concludes that "to conceive of her writing as utterly anti-conventional (or antipatriarchal) is to risk missing any significance it has, apart from its destruction of significance" (15).

My rehearsal of these feminist debates about Stein within the last forty years makes clear that theorizing an alternative model of modernism along the axis of gender (women's writing) is both necessary and difficult. Gilbert and Gubar, Benstock, Showalter, Blau DuPlessis, and others have produced important and convincing studies about women writers' alternative modernisms; these studies construct codes with which we can "appropriately" read women's writing. However, these models might be inadequate for understanding Stein in light of the gap between her life and writing.

In "'Moral Deviancy' and Contemporary Feminism: The Judgment of Gertrude Stein," Karin Cope draws attention to the uneasy relationship between Stein and feminist critics. She states that "[c]laim is laid to Stein, but with an accompanying suspicion" of Stein's "masculinist" and "collaborationist" affiliations (158-9). She specifically addresses Catharine Stimpson's 1992 article, "Gertrude Stein and the Lesbian Lie," which is a revision of her earlier recuperation of Stein in "The Mind, the Body and Gertrude Stein" (1977). In "Gertrude Stein and the Lesbian Lie," Stimpson argues that Stein's production of a "jolly" and "artless" identity in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* "recapitulates mixed messages about sexuality" and renders "cultural history as anecdote and personal history" (158, 160). Stimpson charges Stein of the crime of erasing traces of homosexuality in her autobiographies and pandering to the masses in a "deliberate [aesthetic] retreat" (161).

Cope contends that Stimpson neatly transforms the judgment of Stein's character into a judgment of her writing, eliding the difference between life and art. Stimpson's neat melding of the personal and the public reiterates the motivating maxim of Second Wave feminism that "the personal is political," which is not simply a renovation of the idea of the personal but also of the political. Second Wave feminism grew out of the New Left and the Civil Rights actions of the nineteen-sixties. At stake were a feminist critique of power and the possibility of a complete restructuring of society. In the words of Sheila Rowbotham, the movement sought to "look back at ourselves through our own cultural creations, our actions, our ideas, our pamphlets, our organizations, our history, our theory" (28). This movement shifted the focus of the debate from equality to difference, re-evaluating women's experiences and perspectives as valid cultural forms. As Bat-Ami Bar On summarizes, Second Wave feminism operated upon the belief "that the subjects located at the social margins have an epistemic advantage over those located in the social center" (85).

However, as Stimspon and others have shown, Stein expressed distressingly masculinist values and conservative political affiliations and she does not lend herself to an easy recuperation of a pre-eminent feminist-subject. Because Stein does not publicly avow her "true" identity as a lesbian, a Jew, a conservative, middle-class American expatriate in order to be recognized as such, Stimpson argues that she is practicing deception ("Gertrude Stein" 152). Ironically, in resuming the rhetoric of "unearthing the truth" in "Gertrude Stein and the Lesbian Lie," Stimpson reverses her position on the value of the rhetoric of encoding laid out in her earlier article. She re-codifies Stein's identity and writing as inauthentic. As a result, the idea of encoding, and with it the implication of masking, pretending, and hiding, while allowing for a critique of the oppressiveness of patriarchal hierarchies, both empowers and marginalizes Stein and her writing. Stimpson simultaneously applauds Stein's preeminent feminist (and lesbian) identity and anxiously qualifies the subversiveness of Stein's person and writing. By passing judgment on Stein's character, she distances herself from the undesirable traits of Stein's life.[17] It would seem, then, that feminist investment in Stein is problematic because its critical strategy of highlighting the personal as political leaves little room for mitigating, historical factors.

A similar problem persists in recent material-historicist criticism of Stein. While Second Wave and poststructuralist feminists, in seeking to recuperate Stein as exemplary of women's contribution to culture, had to bracket the nature of Stein's formal and informal politics, a shift in Stein criticism makes this bracketing now impossible. In "Portrait of a National Fetish: Gertrude Stein's 'Introduction to the Speeches of Maréchal Pétain' (1942)," Wanda Van Dusen reads Stein's unpublished introduction as a troubling substantiation of her use of aesthetics to unmark herself of the damaging identities of lesbian and Jew. She argues that Stein fetishized Pétain as a national saviour while masking his pro-fascist oppression of Jews, women, and homosexuals in order to save herself and

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[17] A year after the publication of Cope's essay, Marianne DeKoven edited a special *Modern Fiction Studies* issue on Gertrude Stein to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of Stein's death. She describes the atmosphere of Stein studies as post-utopian, referring particularly to the insolvency of a strand of feminist criticism of the past two decades that has celebrated *jouissance*, erotic excess, and pre-symbolic, female writing. Her observation about the post-utopian age of Stein scholarship is influenced by recent cultural studies critiques of Stein's discursive and ideological alignments. DeKoven exhorts critics to explore "the interrelated questions of sexuality, gender, race, ethnicity, nation, politics, war . . . as well as the (literary) subjectivity forged by her particular path through that history" (474). Stein, indeed, can no longer be idealized in broad-strokes as a radical visionary or a subversive misfit. And while DeKoven admits to writing both *A Different Language* (1983) and *Rich and Strange* (1995) "within a utopian discourse," she states in her introduction to the special journal issue, "What I see now when I look at Stein's writing is a powerful utopian project that is not so much lost as become post-utopian" ("Introduction: Transformations of Gertrude Stein." *Modern Fiction Studies* 42: 3 (1996): 475).

Alice Toklas from deportation and internment (70). Stein's fetishization of Pétain rests on a nationalism that is "distilled and presented as existing outside of time and history," according to Van Dusen (72).

Van Dusen's critique of Stein's connection to the French Vichy government and Pétain calls into question the long-standing assumptions about Stein's radicalism, forcing critics to grapple directly with the issue of political and ideological culpability.[18] Phoebe Stein Davis's "'Even Cake Gets to Have Another Meaning': History, Narrative, and 'Daily Living' in Gertrude Stein's World War II Writings" attempts to understand Stein's oppositions to traditional conceptions of history which exclude "the everyday experiences of those who lived in small towns in France during the war . . . that Stein's war writings work to undermine" (573). John Whittier-Ferguson also critiques the monolithic concept of history in order to understand "what it might have been like to live in occupied France in the first two years of the war" (118). He reasons that "at stake . . . is not only our assessment of Stein's engagements with Pétain, but also our understanding of how we are to discuss politics and modernism without simply slotting individual modernists into an already familiar historical narrative"

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[18] Pre-dating Van Dusen's essay, Michael North's *The Dialect of Modernism*, published in 1994, reads "Melanctha" in relation to a cultural appropriation of African American dialects. He states that while Black writers Alain Locke, James Weldon Johnson, Claude McKay studiously avoided using the minstrel tradition and dialects, Eliot, Stein, and Pound used "black speak" and "black face" humour to perform stylistic tricks (10). North's important analysis of the way in which Stein uses a (black) mask as trope to break with her cultural past interrogates the author's aesthetic strategy as responding to and being influenced by the political climate of her time. The difference between North's and Van Dusen's approach to the critiques of political ideology and writing is Van Dusen's moral judgment, what Cope identifies in Stimpson as a judgment of character as deed (161).

(121).[19] These critics assert that Stein's vexed relationships with official and unofficial discourses of race, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, nationalism, and fascism are complicated by the real dangers she faced because of her social position as a foreigner, Jew, and lesbian.

More recently, Barbara Will explores the possibility that Stein's translations of Pétain's speeches were done under coercion because the literalism of these translations, as opposed to an earlier, rhetorical translation of George Hugnet's *Enfances*, "seems to emerge out of a different sort of collaboration: not a dialogue between equals but a collaboration undertaken under coercion, such as that practiced by an occupied country during war" ("Lost" 662). Some examples of Stein's one-for-one translation are: "This is today french people the task to which I urge you" ("*Telle est, aujourd'hui, Français, la tache à laquelle je vous convie*"); "On the seventeenth of June 1940 it is a year today" ("*Le 17 juin 1940, il y a aujourd'hui une année*"); "But they are mistaken the ones and the others" ("*Ils se méprendront les uns et les autres*") (cited in Will, "Lost" 653). As Will notes, the literalism of Stein's translation distorts syntax and idioms in order to render the speeches "inept" and unbelievable ("Lost" 653).

On the other hand, Stein's translation of *Enfances* "talked back" to the author in order to reassert the translator's "intensely alive" being and genius (Will, "Lost" 657). Thus, "Stein's willingness to lend textual support to Pétain when many other writers in France at the time were choosing simply to be silent throws her actions into stark relief" ("Lost" 664). Will asserts that her obedience to the literal words of Pétain's speeches implies a complicated, even coercive, collaboration with fascism ("Lost" 664).

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[19] He also points out that Van Dusen herself fails to give a proper historical reconstruction of fascism and occupied France, resulting in a "rhetorical failure of memory that makes it difficult to glimpse a subject located in another time" (118).

If, as Will suggests, Stein's translations of the speeches are linguistically unwieldy, then her "Introduction" is more so because it is linguistically ambiguous. On par with her other writing, Stein's "Introduction" refers little to actual events or circumstances, despite promising to "tell a little more what he has done and how he has done it and why I want everybody in America to realise it" (93). However, instead of giving an account of Pétain's heroism at Verdun in the First World War, Stein is distracted by the image "of an old man on a white horse," and so she proceeds to describe the general feeling of worry that he was "too old to last out" (94). The mythical figure of Pétain as saviour is thus deflated by Stein's interruptions of official history by anecdotes of the daily lives of French people. She delivers in her promise to tell a "moving story," but it is the story (told by a Frenchman) of the

> one French one, that one French one has quite logically perhspas [sic] four points of view. Supposing he has a son a prisoner, well he wants the war over as quickly as possible so that his son will come home, so he wants the Germans to win as that would finish the quickest, at the same time he is a business man and he wants business to go on, and that would only happen if the Germans were defeated and England won, then he wants the

> Maréchal and as the English are opposed to him they would insist on bringing back into France all the people who helped to ruin France so they do not want England to win and then there is Russia, and that is ever more complicating. ("Introduction" 94)

Her final appeal is that "no Frenchman can feel simply about this thing" (95). In her conclusion, Stein writes,

> I must say little by little the most critical and the most violent of us have come gradually to do what the Maréchal asks all French people to do, to have faith in him and in the fact that France will live. (95)

She and the French people "*must . . . do what the Maréchal asks.*" In other words, in order to be "pretty well fed" and "slowly regain their health and strength," Stein and others put their hope in a promise that things would return to normal. Thus, Stein's attempt at propaganda feels more like a negotiation of survival, faith, and ideologies.[20]

Stein's use of pronouns in this piece is fascinating and, I think, indicative of her equivocation about Pétain and the Vichy government. She uses "we" at the beginning to align herself with her "countrymen," and this "we" waits as others wait anxiously during the battle of Verdun. Stein then switches to "they" when she declares that Pétain "undoubtedly had saved them . . . . [S]o they did trust him and when he told them anything he told them the truth and very often he did not tell them anything" (94). "We" is used again in a paragraph to describe a discussion of Pétain's actions with neighbours on a country-road, presumably Bilignin, but "they" is used to tell the myth of Pétain claiming victory for himself (95). We can see from these examples Stein's desire to represent herself as an insider in Occupied France, but her use of "they" to speak about Pétain as "the great leader" subtly distances her from the myth of the man.

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[20] These charges against Stein are comparable to the controversy over Pound and de Man's political affiliations during the Second World War. Bill Freind observes that "Pound has a Confucian-influenced belief in the power of a strong leader" (see "'Why do you want to put your ideas in order?': Re-Thinking the Politics of Ezra Pound" *Journal of Modern Literature* 23: 3-4 (2000): 546). See Lindsay Waters's introduction to Paul de Man's *Critical Writings: 1953-1978* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989) for an account of the "Strong Man" favoured by his contemporaries to lead Europe out of its decadence and narcissism (xxiii).

The case of Charles Maurras may allow us to understand and contextualize better Stein's "Introduction" because of his more obvious political alignments. As editor of *L'Action Française*, a journal that greatly influenced T. E. Hulme, Maurras was appalled that the French extremist weekly *Je suis partout* became a vehicle of German propaganda in Paris in 1940. He moved his magazine to Lyon where he continued to support a "Free France" in collaboration with Pétain and his Vichy government (Carroll 71-3). Maurras's nationalism purported to return France to the tradition and aesthetic of classicism in order to recreate an energetic and virile nation.[21] This is why in *De la colère a la justice* he enthusiastically supports the *plein pouvoir* granted to Pétain after the fall of France:

> When the defeat occurred, the nation needed a defender who was devoted only to it, who represented only it, who was interested only in its essential

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[21] See Peter Nicholls's *Modernism: A Literary Guide* for a discussion of the dissemination of Maurras's gender politics in Anglo-American modernism, especially through the figure of Hulme.

> being. . . . PÉTAIN who depended on no one, PÉTAIN whose services were of a strictly national order . . . . (cited in Carroll 94)

Maurras confers on Pétain absolute national authority and legitimacy so that the persecution of Jews under the October 3, 1940 *Statut des juifs* was just in Maurras's eyes because it "returned to the sons of our land the ownership of their professions and restored the honor and freedom of their work" (cited in Carroll 95).

Fascism, according to Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, is "fundamentally a problem of *identity*" and mythic identification with "invisible, nonempirical," national identity that is nevertheless projected as coherent and known (296, 305). They theorize that "mystical recognition is less . . . an act or product of cognition than a 'recognition'" of an absolute subject (307). National Socialism and Pétainism depended upon recognition of the myth of blood and soil in order to mobilize the dream of proper, national subjects. David Carroll posits that French fascism was founded upon a totalizing ideology of the subject, an ideology that represents the individual (Pétain) as the absolute truth of the collective, national subject (21). Maurras's identification with Pétain, we can see, converges around the ideal of a unified national type, thus necessitating the typing of Jews (and also Germans who embodied the Jewish spirit, according to Maurras's democratic villanizing) as barbarians (Carroll 75). This form of nationalism also propagates the "naturalness" of extremist and exclusionary practices.

Stein, who repeatedly tried to delineate national types, was particularly keen on establishing the relationship between individual genius and national character in the case of Picasso, Henry James, Shakespeare, and herself, except her ideation of genius and national types is in aid of the dissolution of race and sex types. The idea of genius allowed Stein to play with definitions of the artistic self, and ideas about "bottom nature" in the early phase of her career, and "entity" in the latter phase of her career with the gap between socially-inscribed and individual subject positions. However, her concern with "bottom natures" in *Three Lives* and typographies of human beings in *The Making of Americans* can be easily posited, as Van Dusen does, as corollaries to national-socialist ideologies of the subject. But this is where it is necessary for us to interrogate the meaning of Stein's "ideology of the subject." Close examination of her writing shows a lack of faith in myths and in the possibility of identification with myths or conventional narratives about being. In *Brewsie and Willie*, her tribute to American soldiers of the Second World War, Stein espouses an individualist politics that, though flawed and contradictory, disconnects her from fascist rhetorics of a coherent, static national identity. And, in *Ida*, Stein explores the possibility of a phenomenological existence not rooted in social conformity or totalizing myths.

This project tracks the development of the subject in three major works, *Three Lives*, *The Geographical History of America*, and *Ida*. In these texts, the self struggles to escape forces of subjection in order to exist more fully and wholly in-itself. In attempting to carve out a space where her characters may esca[illegible]ectivation, Stein's texts as well as her characters often become discombobulated and nonsensical. Fragmentation is not accidental but, rather, purposeful because it countermands the rationalist and objective demands of modernist aesthetics by enabling textual and subjective spontaneity. Stein attempts to write subjectivity as both essential and already inscribed because the self cannot be separate from the symbolic world. Though Stein tries to empty her texts of social and historical subjectivities, there are lapses, or inescapable ruptures of subjectivities, particularly in later works and autobiographies that confront the dilemma of self, self-created-by-other, and other-as-imagined-by-self. When the subject is interpellated by discourse, or when the self recognizes itself as bounded by social forces, she must re-negotiate the discrepancy between her internal and external worlds. These moments are traumatic because the self is turned into a citation of itself. As a result, Stein persistently attacks the modes of being which are dictated by social norms, and which stratify or marginalize people.

Employing feminist and post-structuralist critical approaches, this dissertation deals with two competing limits of Stein's writing: social ideology and the personal, phenomenological, and (possibly) inviolable self. Stein's writing, even in the controversial "Introduction to the Speeches of Maréchal Pétain," absents, to use Van Dusen's term, the usual social markers of identity and undermines conventional identification of self in and through others. In her essay, Van Dusen poses a critical dilemma for Stein critics about "the degree to which the essentialization of subjectivity in the 'Introduction' calls into question deconstructive tendencies in her earlier experimental writing" (70). I am interested in Van Dusen's assertions about "essentialized subjectivity" here because she seems to valorize, in the tradition of feminist interpretations (DeKoven, Ruddick, Fifer), a radical, decentered subject. Van Dusen's critique of "essentialism" is actually a critique of an ideology of the subject which homogenizes and totalizes the individual. However, as feminists, we are not without our ideological motives, and it is important to recognize the double-bind of feminist criticisms as we try to unravel ideologies without being trapped in our own totality or replace one totality for another. If the subject is a social construct regulated by ideology, feminisms must critique ideology to reveal an authentic (feminine) subject. But feminist ideologies, often, essentialize the socially constructed subject and become the disciplining machinery that turns out proper "radical" subjects.

The challenge, then, is to come back to a critical position on the subject without falling into the double-bind of decentering the subject only to reinstate another totalizing concept of subjectivity. While a feminist approach to Stein can be incoherent, it usefully reveals critical epistemological and subjective biases that women, generally, and Stein, specifically, faced in the artistic and social culture of modernism and patriarchy. Starting at this point enables a foregrounding of Stein's constant struggle to eliminate these systematic biases and to render the process of marginalization ineffective so that the idea of "authentic" subjects has no efficacy. I argue that Stein near-destroys the subject in order to recreate the ways in which we frame the subject.

## *Three Lives: "Loving in This Way to Wander"*

Employing contemporary critical theories which re-evaluate the nature of subjectivity and sexed-identities, I read Stein's *Three Lives* (1903) and *Q. E. D.* (1900) as confrontations of the problem of understanding and the incommensurable gulf between opposing consciousnesses resulting from regulatory practices of social interpellation. In *Q. E. D.*, Stein struggles to understand the "incoherence between two subjectivities," that of the sensible Adele and the secretive Helen, both of whom are white and middle-class (Sutherland 46). Adele and Helen embody differing moral and ethical beliefs, and, as a result, Adele cannot reconcile the two halves of her lover which she finds incommensurable—the coarse and "aggressively unsympathetic" and the pure and "infinitely tender" sides of Helen (81). Unable to understand the fluid nature of identity, Adele comments that "you certainly are one too many for me" (81). Helen cries out in anger, but when Adele offers her comfort, she tenderly remarks: "you are the only person with whom I have ever come into close contact, whom I could continue to respect" (82). Adele, however, is unable to give up her idealism and is disgusted when she learns that Helen is financially "bound" to a third party, Mabel Neathe. Adele feels deep bitterness towards her loved one and expects remorse, but she instead receives a letter from Helen chastising her for being a "petty complacent self . . . tramp[ling] everything ruthlessly under your feet without considering whether or not you kill something precious and without being changed or influenced by what you so brutally destroy" (88). Adele believes that “all things are relative,” and yet she is steadfast in her middle-class “habits.” Rather than instinct, Adele approaches the world with “a theory of obligation,” or a premise about ethical relationships that help her to determine both actions and thought (111). Adele abhors the thought of Helen’s “obligation” to Mabel for financial support because she could very well imagine “the necessary return for value received in all cash considerations” (111). The lovers fight a battle of equivalent exchanges and obligation, but Adele Helen eventually come to an emotion “dead-lock” (111).

*Three Lives* is a collection of three novellas about women’s lives. The main characters of the three stories, Anna, Melanctha, and Lena, are poor, young women who have little personal or public authority. They are marginalized because of their gender, class, ethnicity and race; Anna and Lena are German immigrants and Melanctha is mulatto. However, Stein’s sensitive portrayal of their routines and habits, the rhythms of their lives, reveals the limits of both personal empowerment and ideological coercion. Melanctha is most dynamic of the three because of her desire to question her lover Jeff’s claims to knowledge and wisdom. “Melanctha” continues the work that Stein started in *Q. E. D.*, for Adele is transcribed into Jeff and Helen into Melanctha. While Adele and Helen embody differing moral and ethical beliefs, Jeff and Melanctha represent two schools of knowledge—thought versus experience.

These early works enable an understanding of Stein’s gradual departure from her intellectual influences. While Stein’s identification with Otto

Weininger's misogynistic characterology is problematic, other contemporaneous explanations of "woman" were similarly degrading and more destructive in their biological determinism. In "Femininity" (1933), for example, Freud declares that woman is psychologically prone to passive aims because, "on the basis of her share in the sexual function, a preference for passive behaviour and passive aims is carried over into her life" (115-6). That is to say, woman "naturally" identifies with the passivity of her womb and those who do not fit this model are considered by Freud "more masculine than feminine" (117). These ideas about sexed-subjects pervasively inscribe women as non-subjects incapable of vigorous thinking or autonomous, productive activity.

On the other hand, William James's Pragmatism gave Stein a way of thinking about an intentional and autonomous subject. James, like his predecessors and male contemporaries, paid little attention to the root cause of sexual difference because he interpreted the subject as uncompromisingly masculine and neglected to take into consideration the conditions which authorize and legitimize subjectivities. As a result, Charlene Siegfried argues that James's anti-hegemonic and pluralist philosophy did not obviate his sexism (113). Stein's curative for this bias is to highlight, in early texts, interpersonal and discursive power inequalities in order to challenge ideologies of the subject. Social and intimate exchanges in Stein's work embody a collision of forces that often destroy meaning and inter-subjective understanding.

At the turn of the twentieth century, William James's idea of the stream-of-consciousness and Henri Bergson's *durée réelle* seeped into the practices of literary modernism. These life-philosophers unified the chaos of the modern world through theories which reconstructed the relationship between consciousness and the empirical world which was, according to James, a "teeming multiplicity of objects and relations" (*Principles* 146). While they heralded their age as one of unprecedented change and progress, they revolted against the mechanizing effects of rapid industrialization and urbanization. James posits an organic correlation between the workings of the mind and practical consequences. Bergson comprehends discontinuity as a fundamental reality of his age but works to conceptualize the human mind as an unassimilated and elemental creative life-force. Sanford Schwartz argues that these philosophers brought about an "inversion of Platonism" by placing emphasis on the flux of immediate experience rather than the conceptual systems which order the world (12). They questioned the *a priori* truth of concepts and their product (knowledge), emphasizing thinking as an on-going activity instead. And because they called attention to the contingency of thought-experiences and temporal as well as spatial relationships between beings, they altered the concept of the subject.

These developments in the philosophical field spread to many Anglo-American modernists and took root in their poetic practices, namely in the excavation of the psyche and interiority.[22] In *The Principles of Psychology*, James notes that although it is not possible to say "it thinks" in the same way that one would say "it rains," it is possible to say "*thought goes on*," and because thinking is always a part of a personal consciousness, this statement signifies the continuous nature of mental life (146). He argues that "every one of our conceptions is of something which our attention originally tore out of the continuum of felt experience. . . . Every one of them has a way, if the mind is left alone with it, of suggesting other parts of the continuum from which it was torn" (*Principles* 303). In effect, though the world became more and more fragmented, James offered a version of the organic self that recuperated liveliness and human will; he and others like him enabled literary modernists to develop an aesthetic that shored the last morsel of human originality against the ruins.

In addition, Bergson's work on time and the necessity of recovering the immediate intensity of thoughts and experiences (the fringe of analytical intelligence) suggested to modernists like Proust a way of expressing subjective reality in all its density and complicatedness.[23] Bergson theorizes a mode of subjective, transpersonal duration (vital, heterogeneous being) that all could attain (Friedl 59). For Bergson, there is "below the self with well-defined states, a self in which *succeeding* one another means *melting into one another* and forming an organized whole" (*Time* 128). The former self is one derived from the social demands of language and communication: "a self whose existence is made up of distinct moments, whose states are separate from one another and easily expressed in words" (*Time* 138). This self is a symbolical substitute of a "purer" self. The essence of this pure being is duration, in the sense that duration is made up of the multiplicities of "memory, consciousness and freedom" (Deleuze, *Bergsonism* 51). Following the Bergsonian notion that experiences are irreducible to one another, Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* experiments with events of memory and recollection. Marcel, the protagonist, slips in and out of reverie *in order to* come into an introspective and intuitive "I." Proust, in effect, "attempted to capture a level of being beyond the range of individual human perception" (McArthur 340).

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[22] Freud's theory of psychic drives and forces also made a great impact on modernists such as H[illegible] See Diane Chisholm's *H. D.'s Freudian Poetics* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992).

[23] Proust felt that his method was far superior to that of Bergson's. Critics have suggested that this was a gesture to reclaim his originality. Dorothy Richardson, in her letters, critiques Proust's technique as "surely far below Bergson's for whom memory's excursions were the direct result of concentration" (cited in Hanscombe, *The Art of Life: Dorothy Richardson and the Development of Feminist Consciousness.* Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1982, 60 n3).

Others, such as D. H. Lawrence and Ernest Hemingway, rejected this version of the self as an unfruitful belabouring of interiority. Lawrence remarks that the method of Proust, Richardson, and Joyce was "self-consciousness picked into such fine bits" ("The Novel, or A Bomb" 64). Whereas Joyce's representation of Dublin coheres through the consciousness-machinery of his protagonist, Stephen Dedalus, Lawrence's characters experience an incommensurable schism between self and other. Though Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* rejects the demand of individual vicissitudes, it offers a shadow view of the "germ of selfhood" by representing the consequences of failing to heed the primal life-forces that connect man to the natural world (Ghent 21). Lawrence defines the primal self as that which the common self suppresses, causing sexual and generational antagonism. Indeed, his characterization of identity recapitulates a standard modernist apocalyptic view of the state of human relations, which is not unlike Bergson's description of our habits, based in needs, as an obstacle to the vital impulse (*Creative Evolution* 268).

Alternatively, in Stein's writing, this typically modernist dilemma of the incompatibility between internal and external life undergoes a third mutation—a dismantling of subject/object formations in order to eliminate the centrality of the subject. Though a former student of James, Stein rejects the organic metaphor of the "stream" of thought as an integral component of the self's experience of its self (*Principles* 146).[24] Inverting Kantian idealism, James remains faithful to the idea that man is the condition for knowledge and he leaves intact assumptions about the masterful subject (James, *Radical* 57). He posits that "in that part of *my* universe which I call *your* body, your mind and my mind meet and may be called coterminous" (*Radical* 78). In this formulation, the other is a relational object *for* the self who empirically learns of its place in the world through a "continuum of felt experience" (*Principles* 215-16). Experience grounds and defines the knowing self. However, in the act of perceiving objects, the self both gives to and imposes its sense of experiential continuity upon the object. The "I," as the condition for all significatory acts, subjects other selves to its organizing experiences, thus reiterating the dominance of its self.

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[24] At the time that Stein was an undergraduate at Radcliffe, James's Pragmatism was sweeping through American universities, compelling disparate disciplines from philosophy, psychology, to sociology and the humanities to rethink social, cultural, and political systems in order to empower all members of society. (see Charlene Haddock Siegfried, *Pragmatism and Feminism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996, 68).

Because James's philosophy emphasizes the empirical contingency of *individual* action and perception, warning us that "private minds do not agglomerate into a higher compound mind," he disallows any understanding of ideologies in the construction of subjectivities (*Principles* 105).[25] Edith Dodd, Lisa Ruddick, and Catharine N. Parke argue that though Stein's early works experiment with Jamesian principles of time, habit, and immediate experience, they do not faithfully replicate his ideas about the subject. Edith Dodd asserts that "while [Stein] supports James's incremental progression as enabling the new to emerge, she does not favor it if it too closely resembles the 19th Century Evolutionary movement toward some 'far-off divine event'" (81). For Ruddick, Stein rejects Jamesian ideas about "habit" and "attention" as the prerequisites of knowledge in "Melanctha," developing instead "a notion of wisdom as a kind of thought that knows its own ties to the body" (*Reading* 38). James notes that embodied habits are the "conservative agent[s]" of societal norms, acquired through the plasticity of the body and its motor effects (*Principles* 68). However, if the subject cannot develop a sense of experiential continuity or focus the chaotic world into knowledge patterns, then the subject's "inattention" and "mind-wandering" are responsible for her own negative experiences of the world (Ruddick, *Reading* 41).

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[25] On the other hand, Bergson's *élan vital* as absolute life-force suppresses the historical and material conditions operating on the subject.

In addition, Shirley Neuman argues that Stein challenges the continuity of the self in order to articulate the problems with social and historical identity (*Gertrude Stein* 17). Stein resists James's idea that the self depends upon resemblance to unify itself materially, socially, and spiritually because this self flows unproblematically out of socio-historical customs. Also, Clive Bush argues that James's passive voice ("consciousness is distributed") results in a suppression of any definition or discussion about the conditions of the subject (138).[26] James's traditional understanding of the empirical subject prohibits discussion of interpersonal power dynamics and therefore perpetuates larger inequalities. For Stein, it became increasingly apparent that resemblance obscures dissimilarity, and she becomes more interested in "slight differences between people" ("The Gradual Making" 87). Stein's writing and thinking about the issue of identity and the self evolve as she leaves behind these influences. Thus, while the early text *Three Lives* portrays the conditions of subjectivation of women, a middle text such as *The Geographical History of America* focuses on the relationship between the human mind (a Bergsonian, heterogeneous, temporal flux) and human nature (the set of social markers which constitute identity), and a late work such as *Ida* dissolves the boundaries of the "private" subject. This trajectory is that of a work in-progress that chips away at the ideology of the subject and interrogates its discursive markings.

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[26] This seems generally true in traditional philosophy. Jane Duran observes that because the "history of epistemology has been the history of an inquiry into *whether* knowledge was possible, and seldom into the conditions producing knowledge," feminists have had to contend with the machinery of patriarchy in order to articulate the conditions of women's oppression (see Jane Duran's *Toward a Feminist Epistemology*. Savage, MD: Rowan and Littlefield, 1991, 1).

The causal, historical subject is a shorthand, a cliché that Stein repudiates through syntactic disruption. While James and Bergson both deride language for its "false precision,"[27] Stein believes that language is an important "intellectual recreation" ("Poetry and Grammar" 142). She wants to reverse the nineteenth-century trend of allowing public language, "what you say," to direct thought and regulate interior life by forcing language to embody cognition ("What is English" 50). In other words, Stein seems to understand that both thought and language are powerful realities that give shape to individual subjectivities and found the possibility of intersubjective exchanges. In her hands, language is deployed to render the "realism of the composition of [her] thoughts" ("Transatlantic" 16). She believes equally in the "truth" of fiction and in the fictionality of truth. Stein not only invalidates the literary mechanisms for centering the continuity of the social self but also the mechanisms for cementing the authority of a uniform and universal self.

Rather than values, Stein learned from James a critical methodology and the scientific mindset of testing hypotheses. Moreover, she learned that methodology participates in the making of knowledge and truth because it enters into the equation as something that is itself an experienced relation. However, in "The Gradual Making of *The Making of Americans*," she observes,

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[27] This is James's idea from his chapter on "Introspective Observation" in *Principles of Psychology*. James argues that language misleads. Bergson believes unequivocally that "there is no common measure between mind and language" (*Time and Free Will* 165). He posits that language localizes and reduces the experience of things, and "will sometimes deceive as to the nature of sensations felt" (*Time and Free Will* 26, 131).

> When I was working with William James, I completely learned one thing, that science is continuously busy with the complete description of something, with ultimately the complete description of anything with ultimately the complete description of everything. If this can really be done the complete description of everything then what else is there to do. . . .description is unending. (96)

These comments reveal Stein's disenchantment with descriptive empiricism and the idea that "description is explanation" ("The Gradual Making" 88). She comments: "I was sure that in a kind of way the enigma of the universe could in this way be solved," but she came to realize "that as often as I thought and had every reason to be certain that I had included everything in my knowledge of any one something else would turn up that had to be included" ("The Gradual Making" 89). For Stein, the problem lies in the temporal delay between felt experience and analytical composition, the making of "a whole present of something that it had taken a great deal of time to find out" ("The Gradual Making" 91).

The experience of laboratory and dissection work, which only strengthened her resolution that exhaustive description was futile, influenced the writing of *The Making of Americans* (1906-1909). This opus focused on "diagramming" the essential natures of all the varieties of human beings "not so much by the actual words they said or the thought that they had but the movement of their thoughts and words endlessly the same and endlessly different" ("The Gradual Making" 86). She originally believed that if she could describe and classify all the different types of human characters, she would be able to represent the motivations and reasons for general human action. The search for the "bottom nature" of people, instead, resulted in an understanding of social and literary communications as relational. While description offered a useful way of organizing people, it was an endless and fruitless task because the dynamics of interaction would shift according to contextual and discursive forces.

At Radcliffe, Stein began with an intellectual interest in her "own mental and physical processes" which was quickly turned outward ("The Gradual Making" 85). She sought to understand the peculiar intricacies of identity, "everything that was inside [people] that made them that one" and "the infinite variations . . . [of] the movements of their thoughts endlessly the same and endlessly different" ("The Gradual Making" 85-6). In seeking to understand others, Stein became "gayer" and "livelier" because she began to comprehend that "what is inside every one is not all there is of any one" ("The Gradual Making" 92). In other words, she discovered that exhaustive description was not only futile, it negated the meaningful exchanges between beings. In *A Long Gay Book*, she writes, "each one is one being a kind of them and in being that kind of a one is one being, doing, thinking, feeling, remembering and forgetting, loving, disliking, being angry, laughing, eating, drinking, talking, sleeping, waking like all of them of that kind of them" (*Matisse Picasso and Gertrude Stein* 23). The contrast between the halting "each one is one" and the fluid string of on-going activities discloses a uniquely Steinian way of defining the paradoxes of subjectivity. An individual may perform the same actions as others of her "kind" but she remains singular in her "oneness." Her singularity is not contained in one descriptive word or gesture, but in the aggregate facets of her being-in-the-world. Singularity is not reducible to any one thing and is, in fact, constituted by the paradoxes and conflicting statements uttered by the subject. These paradoxes both differentiate the subject from and connect her to her past selves as well as to other selves.

The individual in Stein's writing oscillates from being "one" and "everybody" (pronouns which appear repeatedly in her writing). The Steinian self is both essential and indifferent. Rejecting the drive for identification and intimacy and refusing the drive for (unearthing) interiority, Stein forces us to grapple with the idea that the self is not a tool for detecting the truth of the text or the world. Instead, her complex poetics obliges a re-thinking of the normative politics of self-realization and identification, dislocating assumptions about regulated subject positions, toppling the causal, historical subject. Stein undermines the conventional narrative subject through temporal distortion and referential negation, repudiating the essential truth of gender and other patriarchal categorizations of identity. If these categories are overthrown, it becomes necessary to understand and theorize alternative possibilities for self-actualization and identification. Robert Chodat argues that the work of Stein's writing "force[s] us to make *ourselves* explicit" as well as the "sense-making that comes so effortlessly and swiftly in everyday life" (603). This notion of self-interrogation is integral to constructing forms of identity and being that will not be re-appropriated by patriarchal or other dominating systems. The constant vigilance that is needed in reading Stein and in interpreting her non-conventional syntax entails an interrogation of the transparency of our ideas and truth-claims.

Drawing from rich traditions of feminist and poststructuralist theories[28] which overturn long-standing assumptions about the relationship between the self and the other as well as the self and the world, I read Stein's aesthetics of indeterminacy[29] and discontinuity as a guarantor of a third space of subjectivity. While there can be no space that exists outside of ideology, Stein formulates a discontinuous subject who breaks with accepted, totalizing ideologies of the subject. Judith Butler, in *Bodies that Matter*, asserts that although there is no "ontological thereness that exceeds or counters the boundaries of discourse," there is a "constitutive" social outside that is the excess of discourse's exclusions and boundary-drawing (8). This idea of an inhering "outside" (a space that exceeds social demarcation) enables a revised understanding of critical interpretations of Stein's tendencies towards indeterminacy and non-referentiality. That is to say,

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[28] It is not my intention to argue that Stein's writing neatly folds into any contemporary theoretical project, whether cultural or *écriture* feminisms, poststructuralism, deconstructionism, or others. Her writing does, however, anticipate and converge with many ideas central to these critical schools while remaining alien enough to productively test the limits of ideas such as repetition with a difference, and pre-symbolic *jouissance*.

[29] Marjorie Perloff, in *The Poetics of Indeterminacy: Rimbaud to Cage,* contends that Stein's writing creates indeterminacy in order to allow for semantic openness (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981).

Stein's indeterminacy and non-referentiality may be thought of as attempts to neutralize totalizing ideologies in order to attain a neutered space for the subject.

In this way, Stein's writing parallels certain poststructuralist critiques of political, philosophic, and artistic discourses that have defined subjectivity in positive/negative binaries while denying women, the objectified other, "the right to her difference, submitting the other to the laws of phallic specularity" (Schor 48). Tamsin Lorraine, for instance, calls for a "vocabulary for presenting oneself in a way that minimizes the gap between self and world instead of assuming the self as the privileged anchor of a subject/object split" (181). She argues that while women (passive, immanent, abject) are deemed different from men (active, transcendent, Subject), they are nevertheless disciplined to believe in the superiority of (male) subjects. Schor, speaking about Irigaray's project, insists that "difference can be reinvented, that the bogus difference of misogyny can be reclaimed" in order to topple the universal, Absolute subject (50). Schor, and others, understands that a deconstructive, poststructuralist feminist project aims to intervene in institutional ideologies of the subject through strategic and provisional assertions of marginality (57).[30]

Others question the effectiveness of this approach. Derrida, while positing that "the truth value (that is, Woman as the major allegory of truth in Western discourse) and its correlative, Femininity (the essence or truth of Woman), are there to assuage such hermeneutic anxiety," asks, "Must one think 'difference' 'before' sexual difference or taking off 'from' it? Has this question . . . at least something of a chance of opening up anything at all, however im-pertinent it may appear?" ("Choreographies" 96, 98). Derrida's "impertinence," as he calls it, is a mock apology to feminists for displacing the problematic of sex and gender. This displacement is both provocative and troubling because the question implicitly presents itself as a corrective to the central feminist mission of disassembling oppressive ideologies of sexual difference. Moreover, Derrida's articulation of "hermeneutic anxiety" appears as an unquestioned/unquestionable truth-claim which both reaffirms and seals up the issue of the truth-value of woman. Consequently, the conditions that consign, compel, legitimate woman as counterpoint/guarantor of textual and epistemological authority are left unanswered and unanswerable in the quest for a more essential issue.

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[30] Spivak, however, argues that this tactic must be careful about asserting the pre-eminence of marginality which could very well invoke a set of binary oppositions to enable the re-entrenchment of conditions for centralization and domination ("Marginalia." *The Spivak Reader*. Eds. Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean. New York and London: Routledge, 1996, 41, 49).

Derrida brings up this issue in the same interview as one about "the subordination of regional ontologies to one fundamental ontology" ("Choreographies" 97). He suggests that there is a necessary and more important prior claim in Heiddeger's *Dasein*. According to Derrida, Heiddeger's idea of ontology (in relation to his silence on sexual difference)

> begins by denying itself all accepted forms of security, all the sedimented presuppositions of classical ontology, anthropology, the natural or human sciences, until it falls back this side of such values as the opposition between subject/object, consciousness/unconsciousness, mind/body, and

> many others as well. The existential analytic of the *Dasein* opens the road, so to speak, leading to the question of being; the *Dasein* is neither the human being (a thought recalled earlier by Levinas) nor the subject, neither consciousness nor the self . . . . The *Dasein* is *neuter*. (103-4)

Elizabeth Grosz suggests that in recalling the neutral and asexual nature of *Dasein*, "Derrida wants to claim that there is a sexuality more primordial than the binarized opposition between the sexes, a sexual difference that is neutral with respect to the sexes as they are currently represented, a 'raw material' that, through dispersion and splitting, is rendered concrete and specific" ("Ontology" 119).

However, the potential problem with Derrida's claim is its erasure of the circumstances and systems which condition sexed and sexual identities. Derrida is able to sidestep a discussion of the formation of difference, constructing a being unfettered by ideological presuppositions, by retracing his steps back to Heidegger's desire to destroy classical systems of being to get to a purer ontology. He, in effect, recentralizes patronymic, Western authority. However, if Grosz is right in arguing that Derrida's critique of binarized sexual oppositions actually "interrogates the very conditions under which women have been attributed a secondary social status on the basis of biological, natural, or essential qualities," we must proceed by analyzing these conditions and then extracting, especially in the case of Stein, a non-dichotomous sexed subjectivity ("Ontology" 121). Naomi Schor, in "This Essentialism Which Is Not One," using Irigaray's model of mimesis ("saming"), urges us to look at how we may "speak of positions that are opposite but *symmetrical* without risking relapsing into a logic of saming, precisely what Irigaray has called an 'old dream of symmetry'?" (57). In order to think difference without usurping the privileges of regional differences, Schor stresses the importance of theorizing the analytics of dissymmetry in order to resist the re-entrenchment "of conditions of the production and dissemination of knowledge" and hierarchies masquerading as radical politics (58).

This debate bears upon my reading of Stein because it suggests how gender can still be used without trapping us in reductive dualisms. Teresa de Lauretis argues that to pre-emptively claim that "'woman' is a fiction, a locus of pure difference and resistance to logocentric power, and if there are no women as such, then the very issue of women's oppression would appear to be obsolete and feminism would have no reason to exist" ("The Essence" 10). Instead, she postulates that to conceive of "woman" as an ideological category, a provisional subject-position, and a historicized experience allows us to avoid biological essentialism while still enabling productive interrogation of the "real essence" of power, representation, and identification ("The Essence" 3). In addition, Linda Alcoff observes that too often "Foucault's ontology includes only bodies and pleasure" while Derrida's interest in dismantling logocentric binaries threatens the very category of women—conceptual and lived (408-9). Instead, she argues that "If we combine the concept of identity politics with a conception of the subject as positionality, we can conceive of the subject as non-essentialized and emergent from a historical experience and yet retain our political ability to take gender as an important point of departure" (412).

As a result, reading Stein's *Three Lives, The Geographical History of America,* and *Ida* through the lens of deconstructive and poststructuralist feminisms looking "at the mechanisms of centering"[31] allows me to pursue the possibility of a neutralized ontology. This being sheds all traces of subjectivation and sexualization, existing as a counterpoint to the dominant ideology of the subject. Stein's subjects (after *Three Lives*) are impersonal rather than total.[32] They are not abstract, universal beings because they are always already implicated in "daily life" ("What is English Literature" 57). These selves lose their ability to differentiate between themselves and the world but rather than fearing the loss of their identifiable boundaries, they become indiscernible and indispensable from the physical environment as well as the landscape of the mind. Much like Deleuze and Guattari's impersonal desiring-machines, the Steinian subject, for example, Mable Dodge, "Miss Furr" and "Miss Skeene," and Carl Van Vechten, is as much "plugged" into the world as the natural and social worlds are plugged into her.[33]

*Three Lives* is an interesting anomaly in Stein's oeuvre because it deals frankly with the social machinery of subjectivation and interpellation. It reveals the discursive operations which pressurize the psyche and threaten subjective processes. These three stories have coherent themes and plots (largely absent from Stein's later works) that provide a solid basis for understanding Stein's progressive rejection of intelligibility throughout her career. Stein's Anna, Melanctha, and Lena are unmindful of a discrepancy between the mental world and the physical world, an absent-mindedness which is sometimes debilitating and sometimes to their benefit. Inhabiting the interstices of self and other, these characters attempt to elude narrative disclosures and social surveillance. They are also never simply victims. Even the ever-silent Lena of the third story who has no sense that she "did not like" her life or her American relatives is empowered by her very failings her inability to imagine the cruelties of the world (174). Stein grants her three female protagonists different ways of navigating power in order to reveal the limitations of both personal and social empowerment.

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[31] Spivak, "In a Word. *Interview*." *The Essential Difference*. Eds. Naomi Schor and Elizabeth Weed 162.

[32] I appropriate the idea of a general subject from Foucault who, in *The Archeology of Knowledge*, theorizes a discursive move from total to general conceptions of history in the twentieth century as a move from grand, totalizing to ordinary accounts of history. In addition, Foucault argues that the new knowledge quest of the twentieth century hunts for transformative moments and discontinuous developments (4-9).

[33] See *Anti-Oedipus*. Trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983, 1-8.

Early criticisms of *Three Lives* by Donald Sutherland and Richard Bridgman illuminate the rhetorical handling of characters' psychology without considering the operations of subjection or social interpellation. Sutherland's otherwise astute reading of these texts abrogates the importance of Stein's critique of equality and similarity. He comments that the book has "very little if any political meaning to it. They are primarily human and not social types" (29). On the other hand, a second wave of Stein criticism, following the agenda of Second Wave feminisms, takes on the problem of the social implications of Stein's pointed representation of marginalization. DeKoven is intent on expressing the subversive power of Stein's linguistic structure, a rebellion against patriarchy. Characterizing Stein's writing as "erotic in its excess," an excess which eradicates "all forms of hierarchy," including the "cultural hegemony of sense, order, and coherence," DeKoven lays a framework for valuing Stein's work as embodying "powerful feminist morals" (*A Different* 16, 32).

Ruddick and Fifer emphasize *Three Lives*'s commitment to presenting "a picture of a world that prompts self-punishing behaviour in women" in order to define the intrinsic value of women's lived, bodily experiences (Ruddick 48). Ruddick argues that Stein's expresses her "erotic feelings, her patricidal rage, and her experimental daring" through textual content and metaphors (5). Fifer judges that Stein is never non-signifying and argues for explicit recoveries of lesbian content in Stein's pre-symbolic, anti-patriarchal writing. Following the ground-breaking work of Catharine Stimpson, Fifer infers "unreadability" as a code for subversive lesbian content that was unnameable in the early part of the twentieth century (13). Like DeKoven and Ruddick, Fifer locates the maternal figure and the semiotic phase (theorized by Julia Kristeva) at the heart of Stein's writing in order to interpret language as sensuous, pre-symbolic, and liberatory (16).

In light of these feminist readings, Stein's handling of gender, race, and class inequalities in these stories cannot be overlooked because she points to and critiques the subtle power operations that shape her heroines' lives. As a result, Foucault is crucial to my understanding of *Three Lives* because he argues that the multiplicities of discursive power that enable it to dominate without physical force or overt cruelty. Foucault's idea that "individualism is in fact a discourse of implicit but strategic disciplining," producing "docile bodies" that have been "worked on individually to be successfully manipulated and slotted into the social machinery," illuminates the dilemma of Stein's three female characters in *Three Lives* (*Discipline* 137).

Stein's Anna, Melanctha, and Lena are "clearly victims of their culturally determined female virtues" (DeKoven, *A Different* xviii). However, they are also aggressors in their own ways. Stein's representation of the minute operations of power-games in *Three Lives* resonates with Foucault's assertion that power "traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms of knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression" ("Truth and Power"119). In both Stein and Foucault, power is not simply equivalent to oppression and domination. Power, knowledge, and pleasure are often corollary products of a negotiation between people. In Foucault's formulation, power is "a relation between forces," passing through the hands of the "mastered no less than through the hands of the masters" (Deleuze, *Foucault* 70-1). Thus, my discussion of *Three Lives* is twofold: while these characters often fail to understand or overcome the determining factors of the world and these failures reveal the oppressive patterns of their lives, they also produce, reproduce, and alter the relations of forces.

According to Georgina Johnston, *Three Lives* was originally titled *Three Histories*, possibly to "give the stories more apparent authority" by forcing history to accept fiction as real "histories of individual lives" (36). Donald Sutherland, Michael Hoffman, Norman Weinstein, and Elizabeth Sprigg observe that "The Good Anna" closely follows Flaubert's "Felicité." Like Flaubert's *Trois Contes*, *Three Lives* makes meaning out of the "association of incompatibles" by building up the repeating events of characters' lives (Sutherland 26). However, these "histories" locate themselves as a counterpoint to Flaubert's subtle mockery of women's lives as well as to the aesthetics of the nineteenth century, which Stein claimed to have killed with the creation of "Melanctha" (*Wars I Have Seen* 91). She defies Flaubert's ironic sentimentalization of the heroine's vision on her death bed of the "holy" parrot, a vision that thoroughly mocks the entirety of Felicité's life as well as any idea of transcendentalism (Sutherland 24). Stein's description of Ann's death dispenses with sentimentality in order to show the immanent nature of her life, elucidating the trap of the transcendent/immanent binary for women.

The heroine of "The Good Anna," a hardworking German servant devoted to her mistress, Miss Mathilda, has an "arduous and troubled" life (3). She is described as being stalwart, having a "freakish humour . . . that made her later find delight in brutish servile Katie, in Sally's silly ways and in the badness of Peter and of Rags," and lacking the "power to say no" (23, 36). Because she internalizes the rules of bourgeois society too perfectly, Anna participates in her own exploitation. Divided into three parts, the story begins by establishing the "essential nature" of Anna's character. She observes her stature as a servant with pride and refuses to be loaned out by her employers (13); she spends Miss Mathilda's money frugally so as to help her mistress maintain her social class, but she is easily talked out of her own savings (11-12); she is "very certain in her mind" about right and wrong, scolding a group of men for kicking a dog without fear that she is overstepping her social rank or class (5, 19). Yet her experience of the world is filled with disappointments and shame because her perspective and experiences are myopic. She has no sense that the succeeding tragic events of her life exemplify macro social, power dynamics. As a subject, Anna is an effect of ethnic and racial marginalization, exploitative labour systems, financial and educational poverty, social and political exclusions.

The second part details the beginning of Anna's life as a servant. Told without a causal pastness, Anna's history reads as though it were a present situation, affirming the persistence (almost the fatalism) of the patterns of her life. Anna's past is not given as a key to unlock the character but, rather, as a cumulative result of social and personal forces. She abides by both economic and social class distinctions, and seemingly accepts the custom that the rich deserve better material goods than the poor. Anna's sister-in-law, Mrs. Federner "lost no chance to let Anna feel and see what they all thought" about Anna's generosity to people poorer than herself. Mrs. Federner's manipulation of Anna's "goodness" results in "a gold watch and chain to her god daughter for her birthday, the next month and a new silk umbrella for the elder sister" (32-3). The narrator, however, exposes the sham of class distinctions by commenting that

> when [Anna] bought things for Miss Wadsmith and later for her cherished Miss Mathilda and always entirely from her own taste and often as cheaply as she bought things for her friends for herself, that she on the one hand chose the things having *the right air* for a member of the upper class, and for the others always the things having the awkward ugliness that we call Dutch. (25 [italics mine])

Stein's portrayal of Anna's consumption practices in this passage unveils a surprising critique of the bourgeois class of which she was a member. As a class, the bourgeoisie is differentiated from the lower class by its spending power. Yet, in this passage, Stein implies the illusory nature of its higher status by questioning the very basis upon which cultural and class distinctions are made: the quality and price of material goods. According to Shirley Neuman, series production in the twentieth century meant that "continuity [was] fragmented and [. . .] each object [was] the same as other objects in the series and yet, appearing at a different moment, different" (45-6). In other words, material goods in times of mass production embody a simulacrum of authenticity.

The demand for "the right air," a criteria dictated by societal conventions, highlights the rigidity but also, paradoxically, the haziness of class distinctions (25). Anna is by proxy middle-class in her daily consumptive activities. On days off, she dresses in a "new, brick red, silk waist trimmed with broad black beaded braid, a dark cotton skirt with a new stiff, shiny, black straw hat, trimmed with colored ribbons and a bird. She had on new gloves, and a feather boa about her neck" (25). Fully aware of the function of clothes in novels to tag individuals socially, Stein here mocks the performativity of dress. Butler argues that performative utterances work by mimetic doubling which repeats the original (disciplinary) utterance only to undermine it through replication and parody, becoming "a copy of a copy" ("Imitation" 20).[34] Thus, Anna's ability to (unconsciously) masquerade as a lady of leisure speaks to Stein's critique of the weakness of legitimate class boundaries, especially in an age of mass production.[35]

By troubling the visual semiotic of social status, Stein deconstructs class affiliation as an oppressive system that structures employment opportunities, community networks, and marriage alliances. Class and money are faulty systems of exchange that bankrupt Anna financially and emotionally, leading the narrator to comment, "the poor are generous with their things" (43). This ironical statement crystallizes the ideological operation that disseminates the appropriate behaviour of good, poor people as that of generosity (to the point of oppression). Janice L. Doane claims that Anna has a "misplaced idealism," managing to "create the illusion of control for herself by deliberately seeking out the weakest, most easily guided women and men to work for" (64). Anna's only transgressive act, her relationship with Mrs. Lehntman, "the romance in Anna's life," is obscured by the fact that Mrs. Lehntman, too, borrows all of Anna's money and gives her useless "notes" for the loans (34, 43).

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[34] Though Butler is speaking specifically about gay and lesbian performativity, her concern with identity categories and the problematic of the discursive constitution of the "I" allows for a broader reading.

[35] In *The Arcades Project*, Benjamin includes the excerpt below on fashion by Rudolph von Jhering, "In order to grasp the essence of contemporary fashion, one need not recur to motives of an individual nature . . . . Fashion, as we understand it today, has no individual motives but only a social motive, and it is an accurate perception of this social motive that determines the full appreciation of fashion's essence. This motive is the effort to distinguish the higher classes of society from the lower . . . . Fashion is the barrier—continually raised anew because continually torn down" (74). In addition, Benjamin quotes Charles Blanc's commentary that amongst bourgeois women, "shoulders are enlarged by leg-of-mutton sleeves, and it was not long before the old hoop-petticoats came back into favour and full skirts were the thing" (cited in *Arcades* 74). Blanc adds that "Women, thus accoutered, appeared destined for a sedentary life—family life—since their manner of dress had about it nothing that could ever suggest or seem to further the idea of movement" (cited in *Arcades* 74).

Lending money is Anna's gift of trust and friendship that yields for her only empty gestures and notes. She understands that people take advantage of her, but she cannot refrain from giving away all her money because Anna believes that "there is no certain way to have it for old age, for the taking care of what is saved can never be relied on, for it must always be in strangers' hands in a bank or in investments by a friend" (44). In a sideways move, Stein allows the reader a glimpse of an underprivileged community that is financially unstable and largely inept at interacting with "strangers" who are in control of banks and commerce; it is not only Anna who is exploited by the social class system. However, Anna's autonomy over her savings is empowering because it endows her with a sense of her own worth and situates her in her community as a moral and upstanding individual, despite the fact that her attempts to discipline and guide the poor result only in her savings being used up and "promises in place of payments" (43).

Though the poor and the privileged exploit Anna's generosity, Anna's handling of her monetary affairs empowers her with a (transitive) sense of agency and value.

In contrast, Stein's delineation of the real, bodily mistreatment of women in the service industry leaves no room for misunderstanding class exploitation. Ironically, Anna "worked away her appetite, her health and strength, and always for the sake of those who begged her not to work so hard" (19). Those who "beg" her not to work so hard benefit from her industriousness and, therefore, they are not genuinely invested in making her working conditions better. According to Foucault, the discursive regulation of the "body as a machine: its disciplining, the optimization of its capacities, the extortion of its forces, the parallel increase of its usefulness and its docility, its integration into systems of efficient and economic controls" overtakes individual actions (*History* 139). As an unskilled labourer, Anna has no power and little control over the terms of her employment. Changes "came very soon" and after many years of working for Miss Wadsmith, Anna's employer moves in with her married daughter (20). Recognizing that she cannot work for Miss Wadsmith's fastidious daughter, Anna resigns and easily finds another position with Doctor Shonjen. However, the doctor marries a "proud, unpleasant woman," causing great unhappiness amongst the servants and they, including Anna, leave (39).

Stein's interrogation of "choice" for women in Anna's position delineates a deviation from James's theory about individual free will and intentional action: Anna's actions are always already circumscribed by linguistic, financial, and cultural constraints. In the words of Pierre Bourdieu, these things compose the individual's "habitus," a disposition which obliges agents to act and react in specific ways; "dispositions" are acquired through early inculcation until they are embodied and are durable (*Language* 11). They are pre-conscious, generative, and transposable, a state of the body more so than the mind (*Language* 16). Moreover, the "subtle coercion" of the body, at the level of "movements, gestures, attitudes, rapidity: the infinitesimal power over the active body," reinforces the class and gender system that oppresses her while propagating the illusion that the individual has some form of autonomy (Foucault, *Discipline*137). Consequently, we see Anna saying no (i.e., resigning) only when there is no other choice.

Anna's "goodness" begets her downfall. Fatally ill after many years of manual labour, Anna undergoes an unsuccessful operation. Stein describes her death in two short paragraphs, withholding transcendence in order to reveal the cruel reality of death for the "good" subject. Anna embodies "goodness" in both her thoughts and actions, but there is no heavenly reward for her; she is forced to occupy this position and is exploited because she is "good." As a result, the portrayal of Anna's "essential nature" is ironic because it is the basis upon which people can take advantage of her. In fact, their re-iterations of Anna's goodness only re-inscribe the possibility for her exploitation, and the naturalization of this identity further enables the reproduction of power.

In "The Gradual Making of *The Making of Americans*," Stein expresses a desire to obtain the rhythms and variations of characters' speech, or their "bottom natures," "not so much by the actual words they said or the thought that they had but the movement of their thoughts and words endlessly the same and endlessly different" (86). Through linguistic repetitions that reveal both a character's essential nature and learned or internalized habits, Stein shapes this idea into a description of the strategic deployment of social identities. In "The Good Anna," the cumulative meaning of Anna's speech acts convey an oppressive society that thrives on double-speak in order to regulate and withhold articulatory power from certain kinds of women and men. Anna's personal sense of power is overruled by larger societal ideologies. In one instance, after seeing a fortune teller in order to help her decide about taking a position with Miss Mathilda (who, funnily enough, does the same), Anna is ridden with guilt because of her religious transgressions. She feels compelled to go to confession, but, with too much work to do, she misses mass and becomes "uncertain and distraught" (41). Her agitation increases until her eyeglasses break and she realizes that "she had been bad," a realization which ends her tortured state (41). Religion, then, participates in constructing Anna's personal sense of "goodness" in order to guarantee her obedience. This element of societal inculcation ensures that poor, working-class women in Anna's position are without the means of language to resist disciplining.

Like Anna, Lena, heroine of the last story, is defeated by her own myopic sense of her existence. She lacks the ability to conceptualize her relationship to others and to social discourses. "Patient, gentle, sweet" Lena does what she is told and is unaware of other options; though dissatisfied with her life in Germany because of people's "roughness," she cannot imagine a different life elsewhere until she is actually in Bridgepoint (176). Brought over from Germany by Mrs. Haydon, her aunt, in order to "get her well started" and married, Lena contentedly works as a nanny and makes friends with other young women in the service who jocularly tease and rib her (175). Her life is pleasant and satisfying because she is oblivious to the mental operations of others and the world; she is "dreamy and not there" (176). Lena's dreaminess recalls Bergson's valorization of the transitive and ephemeral duration of Intuition. She seemingly lives the self that opposes the common self; yet Stein renders the consequences of this "pure" existence as dangerous rather than liberatory because Lena is incapable of understanding anything (while Bergson's Intuition is ultimately a manner of distinctive knowing).

Lena's withdrawal from the symbolic world results in a brutal denial of her agency. As an immigrant, someone who does not have the luxury of playing with semiotics, Lena is often confused and unable to determine "just how much Mary [another nanny] meant by what she said" (173). Lena misunderstands the basic premise of language: that meaning is not mathematically quantifiable. The narrator doubles Lena's obtuseness by stating that "Lena did not really know that she did not like it. She did not know that she was always dreamy and not there" (174). DeKoven remarks that there is a lack of moral judgment in these stories because the narrator's "obtuse narration is a function of subjectivity: the narrator's psychology and involvement in the story determine his or her version of it" (*A*

*Different* 28). The narrator, however, is more than just "innocent, straightforward, mildly jolly, and approving" (*A Different* 29); the narrator occupies a shifting role, sometimes at one with the heroines and sometimes externalized, perching outside the purview of the heroines in order to reveal the dynamics of social relations. In "The Good Anna," the narrator hides Anna's feelings from her employer, Miss Mary, in convoluted syntax: "feeling for Mrs. Lehntman as she did made even faithful Anna not quite so strong in her dependence on Miss Mary's need as she would otherwise have been" (20). In "The Gentle Lena," the narrator matter-of-factly reveals the irony that plagues the heroine's life because she is perpetually dreamy and "not there."

Lena's American cousins, daughters of Mrs. Haydon, on the other hand, regurgitate social classifications with ease. They look down upon Lena and her "earth-rough german" relations because they are "ugly and dirty, and as far below them as were italian or negro workmen" (175). Mrs. Haydon and her daughters participate in the social process of self-actualization by classifying their difference from and superiority over others in terms of race and ethnicity. Unable to discern that her little cousins thought her "little better than a nigger," Lena "never stopped to hear them, and the girls did not dare to make their meaning very clear" (176). In this sense, Lena opts out of the nasty games that Mrs. Haydon's daughters play, preserving her natural capacity for simplicity and contentment. And yet her inability to "hear" signifies an inability to participate in discursive practices of self-determination. Language connects intricately to subject positions and symbolic mastery; Lena experiences problems with the social and empirical self because she is unable to master subtexts of meaning. In consequence, Lena's silences and inadequacy with language are the mark of immigrant and poor women's general exclusion from social mobility and personal authority.

After Lena gets married and bears children, she becomes lifeless, wilting under her mother-in-law's unrelenting verbal abuse. Lena's lifelessness mimics her linguistic dumbness, but it also points to Stein's understanding of the oppressiveness of marriage for women. Stein's acute commentary on marriage is directed not simply at the figure of the husband—in this case, Herman—but at the organization of marriage as a submission of a woman's will to a discursive regime. This regime, according to Foucault, operates "as an injunction to silence," coinciding with the development of capitalism "as an integral part of the bourgeois order" (*History* 4, 5). However, Foucault also notes that this thesis about repression works by displacing "the production of power" and its capacity for propagation (*History* 12).

Lena is constantly "scolded" by her mother-in-law about her "carelessness" and her inefficient management of household chores and expenses (193). Lena's mother-in-law (and various other women in these three stories, i.e. Anna) are portrayed as complicitous in perpetuating heterosexist, patriarchal order because of their inculcation and interpellation in it. The continual victimization of Lena, especially by other women, illuminates the problematic of ideological "collusion." To frame the issue in a more productive way, Stein represents the near impossibility of contravening one's "disposition." This is not something that Stein resolves in these short stories. However, in these stories, she already approaches gender not as an essential feature of a self but as a lens through which one reads and is read by the world. Butler's claim that "what we take to be an internal essence of gender is manufactured through a sustained set of acts, posited through the gendered stylization of the body" is fitting in this case (*Gender* xv). Lena's linguistic and bodily passivity, her "dreaminess," embody a stereotypical picture of women as frail and inferior.

"Melanctha," the story that Stein wrote last for the volume, explores the power relations between father and daughter, husband and wife, women, men, friends, and lovers. It also examines the power of language and speech to dominate an *other*. This story signals the beginning of Stein's interest in the function of language as an external materiality of a self. Unlike the descriptive impulse of "The Good Anna" and "The Gentle Lena," language in "Melanctha" creates a multilateral textual appearance that crisscrosses and interrupts itself in order to reveal the conditional nature of language and identity. Rejecting the narrative impetus of conventional novels (plot, climax, denouement), Stein renders the life of Melanctha Herbert in interpenetrating episodes. The episodes are layers that make up Melanctha's total identity, "beginning again and again" to make the total meaning of the character and the text (Stein, "Composition" 26); these episodes are relational linguistic entities and must be weighed and read against one another. This is a strategy that Stein pursues throughout her career, forcing the reader to interpret each word contingently.

From the start, Melanctha is differentiated from her friend Rose in her desire to know and question the ways of the world. Rose, a black woman, raised by adoptive white parents, internalizes ideas about decency in a lazy manner, becoming engaged to one man after another in order to avoid censure about her sexual affairs. Rose's perfunctory acceptance of social norms is contrasted with Melanctha's quest to reconcile personal desire and social obligations: "Melanctha Herbert always loved too hard and much too often," and so she "was always losing what she had in wanting all the things she saw" (62). She is described as puzzling because she wants to know the mysteries of the world, especially men's "natures and their various ways of working" (67). Strangely enough, her introduction into true "wisdom" is with a "roughened" mulatto woman by the name of Jane Harden. They have a two-year relationship that ends when Jane's drinking becomes all-consuming and Melanctha no longer learns anything new from her. Jane gradually becomes embittered that Melanctha assumes authority over their relationship and they part ways.

Melanctha meets Dr. Jefferson Campbell, also of mixed blood, a man who wants his people to "live regular and word hard and understand things" (82). The two are attracted to one another because of their differences; their psyches are mysteries to the other. In their first real exchange, Melanctha and Jeff debate the definition of being "good and regular" people and living the kind of life that Jeff presumes is the best for Black people to live, a life that emulates the ideals of America's white middle-class. In these early encounters, Jeff tries to define Melanctha authoritatively in order to act and react to her accordingly. However, he is unable to determine her essential nature because she is seemingly two kinds of girls and he "can't see any way that they seem to have much to do, to be together in [her]" (97). He is influenced by Jane Harden's description of the "wandering" Melanctha. As a result, she "certainly did seem very ugly to him," making their emotional and physical relationship also "ugly" (101). Melanctha's past continually gets in the way of Jeff's ability to trust and give of himself fully to her, and he begins to question "what it was he felt inside him" (110). Jeff is tormented because "Melanctha was now always making him feel her way," as though he were a "beggar" (123, 124). He struggles with the loss of his personal power in the relationship as the relationship progresses and Melanctha refuses to submit to his will.

Although Jeff likes "living regular and quiet and with [his] family, and doing [his] work, and taking care of people, and trying to understand [everyday life]," Jane and Melanctha, both misfits of sorts, intrigue him because they embody an intellectual and practical philosophy that is different from his "decent" liberalism (82). Jeff, who represents the success of ideological inculcation, is Stein's first character to benefit intellectually and emotionally "from internal struggle" (Ruddick, *Reading* 25). From his encounters with people who see and live in the world in a radically different manner from him, he is able to "improve" and broaden his understanding of human nature and himself.

According to Ruddick, Jeff resembles the figure of Stein's mentor, William James because Jeff's need for "regular living" echoes James's espousal of the importance of habit ("William James" 50). Liesl M.Olson comments that "Jeff Campbell . . . represents a certain kind of pragmatic habituation and steadiness at odds, in the end, with Melanctha's sensual lability" (331). Olson also perceives that "Stein, in one sense, inherits James's positivism (he sees habit as a means toward self-improvement), and yet she does not understand habit primarily in terms of productive action. Rather, habit serves a kind of pleasure—the pleasure of repetition" (329). However, Stein's pleasure in repetition, what she labelled as "insistence," or "never saying anything in the same way because emphasis can never be the same," is a pleasure in creating differences anew ("Portraits and Repetition" 102). Thus, rather than championing habit because, according to James, it "***simplifies the movements required to achieve a given result, makes them more accurate and diminishes fatigue***," Stein deflates her mentor's valuation of the "most precious conservative agent" of society precisely because it stultifies knowledge, perception, and creativity (*Principles* 73, 79).

Through their discussions, Jeff realizes he was mistaken in his early dismissal of Melanctha as "common." He comes to see that she has a keen mind and he appreciates her opinions about the value of "strong, hot love," something that he feared was "dangerous" (86). He admits that he could learn to see her perspective if he "had a real good teacher" (87). However, Jeff continually wonders if he really knows or understands anything about Melanctha because an oscillating power dynamic suffuses their relationship. He struggles with his ability to re-assert any kind of dominance or authority over their relationship and feels "always afraid when he was to go to her" (95).

Recognizing that Jeff is a coward who cannot embrace life passionately and carnally, Melanctha is able to feel "her power very deeply" (95). Melanctha's power is related to her sexuality, and her access to "wisdom" is through sexual "wandering." Her education is effectively gained on the streets, "sometimes near railroad yards, sometimes on the docks or around new buildings where many men were working" (67). Ruddick praises this story for its "lack of moral focus" and reluctance to "interpret or persuade" ("William James" 51). However, this praise is troublesome in light of conventional associations between race, gender, and sexuality. Carolyn Faunce Copeland and Michael North observe that white society conventionally associated Black people with promiscuity. Melanctha may be revolutionary in her fight for the full and sovereign expression of her desires, but Stein gives her this right by racializing her.

Further complicating the issue is the fact that "Melanctha" is a remaking of *Q. E. D.*, Stein's first story, an autobiographical account of Stein's romance with May Bookstaver, a member of Bryn Mawr College's Sapphic community. Leon Katz argues that Stein translates the story of lovers locked in struggle in order to "to reformulate, in successive waves, the fundamental objective of writing itself" (x). Copeland points out that there are thirty-four passages in "Melanctha" which resemble or clearly borrow from *Q. E. D.* (29). Stein's frustrated and thwarted first-experience with same-sex desire resulted in her stylistic creation of the linguistic "rhythm" of characters' personalities and their embodiment (Katz xx). However, Laura Doyle asserts that "Melanctha" differs decisively from *Q. E. D* in that it "insistently reiterates the tropes of sentiment, virtue, race, and reproduction that infuse [. . .] racial myths and nurture subjectivity in the West—allowing [Stein] at once to water and wilt the flower of modernity" (250).

While Ruddick is right in judging that *Three Lives* improves on *Q. E. D.* by rejecting "strident [sexual] moralism," "Melanctha" propagates naturalized assumptions about Black sexuality and morals ("William James" 51). Lorna Smedman points out that Stein's "early texts do tend to set up blackness in contrast to a confining, dull whiteness," though there are indications in other writings (such as *Tender Buttons* and *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*) that Stein participated in an "exoticization of the 'primitive'" not uncommon to her time (573). Michael North also judges that this approach masks the historical conditions of slavery and domination that generated Black dialect and displaces the derogatory values inherent in the idiom (75). On the other hand, we must not forget that both Melanctha and her first lover, Jane Harden, are of mixed blood (60, 73). These two misfits, marginal even within their marginalized community, are evidence of the common practice of slave owners raping their female slaves.

These black characters with white blood at the centre of Stein's story are a historical reminder of miscegenation and violence. They also represent and embody the motif of blurred boundaries and deconstructed meanings. Thus, Stein's quiet treatment of the lesbian affair in "Melanctha" is a repetition of *Q. E. D.* but with an essential difference, a difference that speaks of Stein's changing attitude towards what is knowable and unknowable.

Though Stein appropriates southern "black speak" without challenging racist assumptions that Black people are "lazy" and "careless," her descriptions of Rose's blackness, Melanctha's pale yellowness, and the blueness of her mood also equalize values, remaking the implications of these terms by unlinking "the signifier from the signified" (Smedman 570). In one particular passage, a young "big, serious, melancholy, light brown porter" tells Melanctha a story about "how the white men in the far South tried to kill him because he made one of them who was drunk and called him a damned nigger, and who refused to pay money for his chair to a nigger, get off the train between stations" (69). The porter was forced to leave the South permanently because the white men "swore that if he ever came there again they would surely kill him" (69). Stein's simple style of "ironic objectivity," which opens the way for broad social observations while escaping the pitfalls of sentimentalism, gives authority to this informal knowledge transfer (Sutherland 43). Consequently, Stein is able to portray a dark aspect of American society without resorting to fetishism or exoticization.

Moreover, Stein's evasive style circumvents ideological interpellation; Melanctha comes into a form of knowledge that is unclaimed by the watchful eyes of ideology. Stein's "prolonged present" and "continuous present" sustain a single moment of narration for as long as possible, in order to produce patterns that construct the whole self ("Composition" 22-4). This formulationchallenges the importance of habit and instrumental thinking. As Ruddick argues, this style enables Stein to evoke sympathy for the "dissolute but undeniably exciting Melanctha Herbert" rather than the "scrupulous Adele" of *Q. E. D.* ("William James" 53). In relation to Rose, Melanctha is elegant and intelligent; in relation to her volatile father, Melanctha has break neck courage and a quick tongue; and in relation to the decent, "regular living" Jeff Campbell, Melanctha has a deep understanding of the complexities of life. Stein shows that though Jeff defends "regular living" over "excitements," he is repeatedly attracted to exciting characters, or characters who wander away from social norms (84).

Through Melanctha, Stein fashions the beginning of a truly performative self. Melanctha, unlike Anna and Lena, navigates social conventions deftly in order to access the power available to someone in her position. Circumscribed by the gendered and racial strictures of society, she performs doubling speech acts in order to manipulate interpersonal norms. Melanctha comments: "I was awful ready, Jeff, to let you say anything you liked that gave you any pleasure. You could say all about me what you wanted, Jeff, and I would try to stand it, so as you would be sure to be liking it, Jeff, but you was too cruel to me" (98).

Subsequently, she sooths him by saying "you are only a great big boy, Jeff Campbell, and you don't know nothing yet about real hurting" (99). Following this, she explains to Jeff, "Hush, Jeff, you don't know nothing at all about what you are" (100). In these exchanges, Melanctha transforms herself and alters the dynamic in order to empower herself.

However, performativity can only work at the individual level. *Three Lives* enables an understanding of the uniqueness of race, poverty, linguistic deficiency as engendering different sets of class issues; instead of erasing historical conditions, "Melanctha" illuminates a historical class of racialized others. As Foucault postulates, the social body "aims to establish presences and absences, to know where and how to locate individuals, to set up useful communications, to interrupt others, to be able to at each moment to supervise the conduct of each individual, to assess it, to judge it, to calculate its qualities or merits" (*Discipline* 143). At the level of discourse, Melanctha is still trapped and articulated by physical and ideological boundaries. She can try as much as she wants to escape the confines of a racist, sexist, homophobic, and class-ruled society, "to come very near to making a long step on the road that leads to wisdom," but she must restrain herself out of fear of the physical and discursive borders of her life (70).

The lurching speech of all three heroines in the text cuts across racial and gender divides, highlighting the interconnected axes of subjugation. When Lena speaks, which is rare, she sounds like Melanctha: "Why, I do anything that you say, Aunt Mathilda. Yes, I like him. He don't say much to me, but I guess he is a good man, and I do anything you say for me to do" (181). In her relationship with Mrs. Lehntman as well as with her brother's wife, Anna cannot match the linguistic games that they play. Language generally bewilders Anna. When she must confront Miss Mary Wadsmith about an employment matter, she stutters awkwardly, but the power of her feelings are the true sources of articulatory exchange because the "power in the mood of Anna's soul frightened and awed Miss Mary through and through" (17). In contrast, her way of asserting personal power is to give money. The symbolic discrepancy of exchange values between language, emotion, and money reveals a problem in the ethical nature of interpersonal relationships. Anna's employers use money to exploit her while her friends and family use their linguistic "brilliancy and charm" to manipulate her (24). Anna gives up her money and linguistic mastery in order to gain some modicum of control over her relationships, but she learns that "in friendship, power always has its downward curve" (35).

Stein's experiments with syntax reveal the ambiguity of interpersonal class relations. Anna may be stupid, but her mistresses are lazy and weak-hearted. Adjectives attributed to individuals take on different connotations in conjunction with and in relation to other adjectives in the text: from the perspectives of morally lax and insipid characters like Mrs. Lehntman and Miss Mathilda, Anna's judgements are vigorous and rigid. Stein leaves it to her narrator to sardonically comment, "it was wonderful how Mrs. Lehntman could listen and not hear, could answer and not decide" (24-5). Descriptions in all three stories are saturated with adjectives: arduous, troubled, gentle, patient, sweet, German, lazy, fat, stupid, powerful, joyous, graceful, pale yellow, intelligent. Though some of these words cannot be extricated from racial and sexual implications, these strings of adjectives reveal the radically relational quality of words.

However, this manner of writing has paradoxical consequences for all three heroines of *Three Lives*. Habit and habituation in "The Good Anna" and "The Gentle Lena" confine these women and exploit their labour. In addition, Stein's suspension of temporal narrative development, on the one hand, liberates the heroines from their pasts, but, on the other hand, freezes their acquisition of knowledge and capacity to adapt. Furthermore, the heroine's resistance to habit and social conventions in "Melanctha" does not free her from racial and sexual classifications. She is judged by all those around her and, in the end, dies alone.

*Three Lives* is a work unlike the majority of Stein's oeuvre. It confronts the problem of understanding and the incommensurable gulf between opposing consciousnesses as well as the social pressures upon characters. These women are not heroines in the tradition of Flaubert's Emma Bovary or of Joyce's Molly Bloom. While Flaubert and Joyce, in pointing out the hypocrisy of marriage vows, gesture to women's dystopia, they render women as empowered but also dangerous, wilful, petty, petulant, and traitorous. Stein's representation of women, on the other hand, points to the interlocking economic, linguistic, racial, ethnic, sexual orders of oppression.

## *"Not Solve it But Be in It": The Geographical History of America*

*The Geographical History of America: Or the Relation of Human Nature to the Human Mind* (1936) revolves around questions that had plagued Stein for decades, and neither the manner nor the issues were out of the ordinary for her. In other works such as *G M P* (1909-12), "Photograph A Play in Five Acts" (1920), *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1933), *Four in America* (1933), "Identity A Poem" (1935), and *Everybody's Autobiography* (1936), she is equally concerned about identity, creation, history, and knowledge. However, *The Geographical History of America* is particularly interesting for its representation of human nature and the human mind as lived modalities of the subject. For Stein, human nature and the human mind are the cornerstones of the self; they form the knowledge-structures of a fundamentally incoherent subject that is forced to grapple with the disunity of itself and its relationship to the world. However, this disunity also rescues the subject from social and symbolic imprisonment by enabling a break from instrumentality, logic, and causality and by giving rise to moments of epistemological uniqueness. In this middle-career work, Stein moves away from the idea of subjection and towards the possibility of singularity.

*The Geographical History of America* points to a double experience of the world as a twofold combination of human nature and the human mind; while human nature experiences events in a social context, the human mind apprehends the uniqueness of the world as a discreet present. Because of this division, critics often argue that Stein's conception of the human mind reiterates the conventional divide of mind over matter. Bruce Goebel asserts that Stein recapitulates a longstanding dichotomy between immanent, human experience and "the literary work as transcendent genius," transfiguring time, memory, and death in order to overcome "the threat to her sense of transcendence" (242-3). He contends that while Stein fails to achieve "transcendence through human connections" in *Q. E. D.*, she obtains a "temporary resolution by shifting her focus from character to language itself" in *The Geographical History of America* (239, 241). However, while Stein does achieve a deferral of consolidated meaning and identity through language-play, it is hard to see anything transcendent or sublime in this text. For Stein, the human mind is "in contact with" anything and it "wanders" in order to gather and produce an incisive composition of its total environment (*GHA* 66, 85).

Elliott Vanskike, in addition, argues that Stein prioritizes landscape as a "phenomenal vortex that brings together writing and the human mind" (161). He adds, "human nature, because of its preoccupation with the day-to-day exigencies of living, cannot ascend to a level where it can view the relations among parts of the landscape" (161). For Vanskike, this results in the construction of landscape as "one of the most powerful metaphors Stein uses to keep herself and her writing from becoming mired in history and shackled to a destructive sense of identity" (152). He claims that "Stein's effort throughout *The Geographical History of America* is invested in denying the destructive power of history and identity" because "to be inserted in history is to have personal identity frozen in stasis" (162, 152).

Indeed, Stein abhors history and its disciplining effect on identity. She believes that identities are over-determined by social and historical forces and are based on superficial acts of recognition and memory ("What Are Masterpieces" 148-9). This situation turns the self into a passive cipher through which dominant (bourgeois) ideology is reproduced. However, she clearly wants to distance both the human mind and human nature from identity, claiming that "The question of identity has nothing to do with the human mind it has something although really nothing altogether to do with human nature. Any dog has identity" (*GHA* 134). Moreover, "human nature acts as it acts when it is identified when there is an identity *but it is not human nature that has anything to do with that*" (*GHA* 188, 135 [italics mine]). In other words, identity is not equivalent to either human nature or the human mind; it denotes subject-positions that are imposed upon the subject by the external world.

Also, in mocking the assertion that "I am I because my little dog knows me," Stein rejects the idea that any meaningful sense can be obtained by embracing external identifications. As she comments, the equation fails "to prove anything about you it only proves something about the dog," and, according to Stein, any dog has "identity" and so cannot "know" (*GHA* 103). The little dog represents not only identity but also the absence of knowledge (*GHA* 50). Stein contends that "the little dog knowing that you are you and your recognizing that he knows, that is what destroys creation" ("What Are Masterpieces"149). Because the dog's "knowledge" is habitual and constitutive of the dog's identity rather than the subject's, those who define themselves via this false connection are necessarily excluded from the category of an "entity," that is, "a thing in itself and not in relation" ("What Are Masterpieces" 151).

Stein's concept of a "thing in itself" indicates the erasure of temporal discrepancies. In Stein's words, when there is time, memory, and history, "entity does not exist there are two presents instead of one and so once again creation breaks down" ("What are Masterpieces" 150). Not only are memory and identity opposed to knowledge, they halt the production of knowledge and masterpieces. When one remembers or reconstructs events into a narrative that is cogent and causal, one falls into the trap of defining oneself according to historical social relations. Thus, in employing geography as an analogy for the human mind, Stein not only reminds us that the mind is a physical object and a part of the social and symbolic world but she also insists that knowledge is instantaneous and discreet, or "flat." According to Stein, "the human mind has neither identity nor time and when it sees anything has to look flat" (*GHA* 175). In other words, the human mind wrenches object of perception out of time's continuum; it denudes itself and the physical act of seeing of time.

Contrary to what Goebel and Vanskike assert, Stein represents geography immanently as "land lying as it does," and "any one looking at it [must see it] as it is" (*GHA* 73). "Seeing it as it is" involves a two-part process of seeing the immutable fact of the world but also of seeing differently moment to moment. The human mind recomposes itself and the composite picture in every new act of seeing; the human mind and flat land are reflexively constituted by one another in this manner of "seeing" (*GHA* 175). Bucknell points out that, for Stein, seeing embodies the tension between the "now" and the way in which several temporal "nows" are brought to bear upon knowledge making and knowledge acquisition (173). In addition, Steiner observes that "Stein's insistence on rendering each moment of present-perception as a dimensionless 'now' involved a reversal of the time status of her medium" (141). In effect, her absorption with large expanses of flat land stretches toward a configuration of the subject and knowledge removed from time, history, succession, and causality.

Stein's presentism ensures that "there is no progressing" and "there is no going on there is just staying within" (*GHA* 67, 184). This speaks of a refusal of the myth of human progression towards a perfect truth. For Stein, history could not guarantee the perfection of human knowledge because its tenets of progress and causality had radically failed, as evidenced by the World Wars. In Stein's mind, "history is the state of confusion between anybody doing anything and anything happening" (*GHA* 133). Her appeals to historical fact ("They say that Washington and Lincoln and I were born in that month the month of February and that this nobody can deny" (*GHA* 51)) are ironical and highlight the meaninglessness of truth-claims grounded on historicity alone.[36] Though she compares herself with important historical figures, she qualifies the value of doing so by remarking, "I am I because my little dog knows me. That is just the way history is written" (*GHA* 136). The value of identifying with historical figures is just as meaningless as identifying oneself in relation to one's pet dog.

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[36] While Stein stridently attempts to erase all traces of history and its claims upon the individual, she could not completely neglect the horrors of the two World Wars. By focusing on the activities and relations of daily living, Stein rescues elements of human-ness from events that had much to do with dehumanization and the downfall of rationalism, or the human mind. This focus, according to Phoebe Stein Davis, "rewrite[s] traditional conceptions of history to include the everyday experiences of those who lived in small towns in France during the war" ("Even Cake"

In "Transatlantic Interview," she observes,

> If time exists your writing is ephemeral. You can have a historical time but for you the time does not exist and if you are writing about the present the time element must cease to exist.... In [*Wars I Have Seen*] I described something momentous happening under my eyes and I was able to do it without a great sense of time. There should not be a sense of time but an existence suspended in time. That is really where I am at the present moment. I am still largely meditating about this sense of time. (19)

For Stein, an existence organized by standardized time runs the risk of being specious. Time is "occupying" rather than "interesting" because it turns experiences into discreet and homogenized moments and materializes subjectivity

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570). Moreover, it undermines the "opposition between history and the everyday" and forestalls the division between mind and matter ("Even Cake" 570). Also, according to Ulla Dydo, Stein "worked to absorb into the continuity of her writing the discontinuities of the [First] World War," writing the first part of "Pink Melon Joy" during her eleven weeks (July 31-October 17, 1914) at Evelyn and Alfred North Whiteheads' home in Wiltshire (*A Stein Reader* 280; Souhami 121-22). War and violence, as a result, haunt the simple pleasures of daily living in this text's first half: Stein writes under a section titled "Instances," "Violences./ Not any whirl./ Not by all means./ Don't you think so" ("Pink Melon Joy" 282); in "Hymns," "Look here let us think about hospitality. There is more said and kindness. There are words of praise. There is a wonderful salad. There can be excellent arrangements. Suddenly I saw that I rushed in. I was wise./ We were right. We meant pale. We were wonderfully shattered. Why are we shattered. Only by an arrest of thought. I don't make it out. Hope there. Hope not" ("Pink Melon Joy" 283); and in "All recovering," "Shall rest. Shall rest more. Shall in horror. Shall rest. Shall rest more then" ("Pink Melon Joy" 285). In the second half of the text, written in Paris, Stein concludes, "I do not forget a war" ("Pink Melon Joy" 290). However, the piece ends with a "Kiss," signifying the exchange of affection that is also a reaffirmation of life ("Pink Melon Joy" 305).

in an equally mechanical manner (142). She states, "there was time enough time did not make any difference because there is always time enough, if there is enough of anything then one need not be worrying and there always is time enough" (*GHA* 184).

Stein's attitude toward time deviates from James's idea of time as an organic stream of subjective continuity. In *The Principles of Psychology*, he elaborates that "The knowledge of some other part of the stream, past or future, near or remote, is always mixed in with our knowledge of the present thing" because there is always an "echo of the objects just past" (396-7). His much quoted adage, "The practically cognized present is no knife-edge, but a saddle-back, with a certain breadth of its own on which we sit perched, and from which we look in two directions into time," speaks to a sense of time saturated by both the past and the future (399). For James, the experience of time forces the self to continually look farther and deeper into both the past as well as the future. And this is what guarantees progress and knowledge.

Unlike James, Stein thinks of the time of the present as a series of "presents" which occur next to one another. She rejects temporal succession, claiming, "one and one makes two but not in minutes" (*GHA* 67). She also states that the business of art is "to live in the actual present, that is the complete actual present, and to completely express that complete actual present" ("Plays" 66). Stein's emphasis on the "present" is not a valorization of an unadulterated, pure immediacy, but, rather, a conviction about the uniqueness of every singular moment in life, art, and knowledge. As a result, each moment in *The Geographical History of America* enacts a "present" that is discontinuous with the temporal "stream" posited by James as fundamental to our experience of self-continuity. Continuity can never be assumed because "most things have not, have not anything to do with anything" (*GHA* 126). The persistent disconnection in *The Geographical History of America* stages the increasing disarray of the presiding consciousness, a disorder which mirrors the chaos of the world.

That Stein embraces disunity points to a definitive break from James and his philosophy of "practical consequences."[37] In "What Pragmatism Means," the second lecture of *Pragmatism and Other Essays*, James outlines this philosophical approach as a theory of "practical consequences" (102). He argues that the pragmatist expiates "dogma, artificiality, and the pretence of finality in truth" and "turns away from abstraction and insufficiency, from verbal solutions, from bad *a priori* reasons, from fixed principles, closed systems, and pretended absolutes and origins" (26). Here, James's philosophy sounds remarkably similar to Stein's literary practice. However, his conclusions go in another direction entirely.

In lecture six of the same book ("Pragmatism's Conception of Truth"), James states,

> truth lives, in fact, for the most part on a credit system. Our thoughts and beliefs 'pass', so long as nothing challenges them, just as bank-notes pass

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[37] In her notebook, Stein states, "When Leo said that all classification was teleological I knew that I was not a pragmatist. I do not believe that, I believe in reality as Cézanne or Caliban believed in it. I believe in repetition. [Maurice] Sterne gave me the feeling of it" (cited in Katz, "Weininger" 22).

> so long as nobody refuses them. But all this points to direct face-to-face verification somewhere, without which the fabric of truth collapses like a financial system with no cash-basis whatever. You may accept my verification of one thing, I yours of another. We trade on each other's truths. But beliefs verified concretely by *somebody* are the posts of the whole superstructure. (100)

James commends the utility of thinking as a means of secularizing and democratizing knowledge: "they pay by guiding us into or towards some part of a system that dips at numerous points into sense-percepts, which we may copy mentally or not, but with which at any rate we are now in the kind of commerce vaguely designated as verification. Truth for us is simply a collective name for verification-processes, just as health, wealth, strength, etc., are names for other processes connected with life, and also pursued because it pays to pursue them" (*Pragmatism* 99). In other words, truth is verified by life and it is inextricable from use-exchange, a premise that is necessarily positivist and causal.

*The Geographical History of America*, on the other hand, is perhaps Stein's strongest refutation of the exigencies of order, unity, logicality, and retroactive causal explanations (e.g. memory). This is not only a rejection of the way that language works but also of the way that we represent the subject and how the self can come into being. Her self-reflexive interrogations and contradictory assertions in *The Geographical History of America* perpetually reverse prior truth-claims. The speaker asks herself, "Do I do this so that I can go on or just to please any one. As I say it makes no difference because although I am always right is being right anything" (229). Truth must be denied closure and the status of universality. The pursuit of the singular, true answer can only refer us back to "what is what is what is what" because the difference between binary terms, thesis and antithesis, is ultimately "tiresome" and "not interesting" (229-230).

Instead, she advocates that one should "define what you do by what you see never by what you know because you do not know that this is so" (*GHA* 162). More specifically, she repudiates what she perceives to be a positivist bias because philosophers and scientists "did not know what they saw because they said they saw what they knew, and if they saw it they no longer knew it because then they were two" (*GHA* 178). According to Stein, then, philosophers defend what they already know rather than being open to what they see and, as a result, they experience an epistemological split that must be disavowed or repressed in order to maintain the appearance of congruity. The practice of reducing experience to unassailable concepts (idealism) rather than creating contingent concepts out of experiences forces the self to subjugate its immediate experience of the world; thus, Stein declares that one should "be careful of analysis and analogy" (*GHA* 93). Instead, the objective is "once more to renounce because and become" because "anything is what it is" (*GHA* 75).

Moreover, she challenges the conservativeness of James's instrumentalism. As *Three Lives* demonstrates, the imbalance between personal virtue and social approval makes the question of judiciousness and compensation untenable. Stein rejects the principle that thinking "pays," declaring that "knowledge is what you know" ("Plays" 65). She also comments that "in asking a question one is not answering but one is as one may say deciding about knowing," and in asking about the nature of knowledge, there is evidence of "knowledge" ("Plays" 65). In other words, part of the act of knowing is to come to terms with the question of what is true. Thus, "thinking" usurps verification. Stein forces the reader to do her own thinking and to yield her own conclusions: "Think of what anybody does they read what is or has been written. They do not read what is or has been said" (*GHA* 79). She demands that one do the intellectual work oneself to produce one's own knowledge rather than rely on pre-established concepts and scientific truths.

However, Steven Meyer argues that Stein's "rejection of science need[s] to be qualified by the recognition that she made these claims with what she herself would have described as a characteristically nineteenth-century conception of science" rather than the "organicism" of those like William James and Alfred North Whitehead (*Irresistible* 4-5). According to Meyer, because Stein experiments with "vivisection" at the structure of language as well as the process of reading, Stein actuates an "experimental science" that is learned from James and Whitehead (for whom Stein professed admiration in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*) (*Irresistible* 221, xxi). He argues that Stein inherits from James the idea of "radical empiricism," that our experiences of the world overflow with personal perceptions and beliefs as well as empirical data (*Irresistible* 13). He also asserts that Stein follows Whitehead in his desire to bridge the gap between mechanistic sciences and the "intuition of mankind which finds its expression in poetry and its practical exemplification in the presuppositions of daily life."[38] As a result, Stein composes "emotionally resonant wholes" ("Physiognomy" 100).

Meyer's mapping of the "correlations" between Stein and her intellectual influences enables a better understanding of Stein's epistemological landscape. However, Meyer does not merely want to argue that the "New Biology" of the 1890s and writing are correlated but that "writing is itself an extension or externalization of the human central nervous system" (*Irresistible* 320). For Meyer, "The nervous system as characterized by neuron doctrine is anatomically discontinuous and physiologically or functionally continuous, and as such it offers a model for an organicism that combines discontinuity and coherence" (*Irresistible* 111). In addition, he states that Stein's "dissociative practices [. . .] may not correspond to any particular anatomical, or subanatomical, structure, yet it is a function of a properly functioning nervous system" (*Irresistible* 111). Meyer's desire to read Stein's writing as a neurological poetics, however, does more to further an understanding of neurology rather than Stein's writing.

In "Sense, Science, and the Interpretations of Gertrude Stein," Chodat astutely points out that Stein's writing does not fit scientific models in any substantive manner because it can never be successfully duplicated: "If we understood Stein's text as an 'experiment,' could we ever repeat it to see if we could achieve the same outcome?" (592). Stein's texts such as "If I Told Him" would inevitably fail to produce universal laws or "general predictive hypotheses" (592). Rejecting the idea that Stein achieves a "realistic" or "objective" account of the world, he contends that Stein is searching for "a 'science of the inner world'" wherein the "first-person perspective comes to occupy the same privileged place that science ordinarily accords the third-person perspective" (589). He claims that "To see sub-personal systems as the 'ground' of meaning for a person's language and behavior is to endorse an essentially internalist conception of meaning" (595). This means that, for Chodat, we must "trace [her] words back to Stein's 'inner' mental processes" (Chodat 591).

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[38] Whitehead, cited in Meyer, *Irresistible Dictation* 4.

Because Chodat's idea of a "science of the inner world" appeals, once again, to a system of order and unity, it runs into two related problems: firstly, the idea that interior life can be thought of as a stable mini-universe is paradoxical to Stein's refusal of linearity, coherence, and logic; secondly, in order to ground meaning in the author's inner processes, one has to subscribe to a teleological or goal-directed explanation that overpowers Stein's "nonsensicality" (594, 596, 587). How we could ever gain access to what "goes on 'inside'" is ambiguous. Chodat explains that we should seek to understand her "intentions" as part of her sub-personal system in order to "locate the meaning of a person's 'outer' behaviour (speech, action) in something 'inside'" (595, 596). This is akin to biographical criticism because it enables "patterns" of meaning to emerge (603).

There is a usefulness in establishing patterns or employing biographical criticism in Stein's work, especially since so much of it is abstruse. However, we must be cautious of the extent in which we are willing to "rationalize" her writing. In "Transatlantic Interview," Stein stakes claim for the "realism of the composition of her thoughts" because she is not interested simply in the content (what Chodat clings to as the verifiable and public aspect of her writing) but also in the configuration of her mental processes (16). She is in fact making a claim for the simultaneity of epistemological and ontological reality—not a causal position of "I think, therefore I am" but a gesture towards a statement such as "I think I am" or "I am I, think."

What is really useful about Chodat's reading is his explanation of essence in Stein's work. He states,

> 'Essence' for Stein is not what makes a thing a member of a class, but rather what makes it a particular, a token and not a type: what it is in its 'immediate' thatness, without comparisons to—thinking about, remembrance of, classification with—other entities. Essence for Stein is what makes a thing unlike any generic kind, how it is that 'each one is that one'. (586)

Chodat clarifies a central paradox in Stein's work: the sense that language, identity, and relations are in radical flux but also constant. Through trial and error, Stein attempts to render the essential nature of any given moment while also maintaining its contingency.

In a similar manner, Cope contends that Stein's desire to portray the "constant inconsistency" of her subjects, Picasso especially, is to mark "both a constancy of character and the passage of time—precisely two components that she will later suggest are constitutive of problematics of identity" (*Passionate* 46). It is the constancy of a subject's particular way of experiencing the world over and over again that constitutes that subject's sense of self. According to Cope, Stein's representation of Picasso's artistic method as an act of "swallowing" is related to her belief that daily living gives meaning to the artist's subjectivity as well as the art object; the boundaries between inside and outside, creation and life, are necessarily blurred by an "incorporative or introjective" internalization that is unique to every individual (*Passionate* 45). Cope also argues that Stein, like Picasso, "swallowed outward" by completely digesting and then flinging her senses back into the world (*Passionate* 47). Moreover, Stein's portrait establishes Picasso's "form of singularity [through] an account of the significance of Picasso's character, influence, movements, as well as the habits and types of his work" (*Passionate* 49). Picasso's essence guarantees that his "daily living" differs from day to day—but, his experiences also shape and refine his character, movement, and understanding of the world.

For Stein, daily living is an intermediary state between unknowing-identity and the knowing human mind; it includes activities that are performed and transacted on any given day. In *Paris France*, Stein writes, "french [sic] people really do not believe that anything is important except daily living and the ground that gives it to them and defending themselves from the enemy. Government has no importance except insofar as it does that" (8-9). Elsewhere, Stein remarks that when you are "leading your daily inside life," you "own everything outside" and so there is no need to "explain the inside to the inside life and the owning of the outside to the inside" ("What Is English" 51). For the writer and the artist, daily living provides nourishment for assembling and creating masterpieces, and as the subject proceeds through his world, he discovers himself and the world at the same time.

In this way, daily living signifies one way in which any human being comes to terms with himself and his truths. Stein's persistent references to this notion in her lectures make it not a casual idea but a key belief, for this conviction helps to shape Stein's conception of the subject's uniqueness, the subject's "constant inconsistency."[39] The incarnate events of daily living bring about "daily miracles," or, epiphanies that are intensely felt and creatively rewarding (*Paris France* 3). It describes human experiences as pleasurable and as daily repetitions that are the same yet also different from moment to moment and from day to day, but it also means a fluid exchangeability between the self and the world in a "continuous present," wherein the self's in-take of the world means that the world likewise takes-in the self. Stein suggests that daily living liberates the self from grand narratives of subjectivity because "one has no identity that is when one is in the act of doing anything" ("What Are Masterpieces"148). The principle "doing anything," especially writing because "writing is neither remembering nor forgetting neither beginning or ending," prevents identity and therefore repetition from setting in (*GHA* 142).

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[39] Stein's sense of daily living is often neglected by critics because it exists in contradistinction to her non-referential aesthetic. Steven Meyer, for example, makes several references to Stein's denigration of daily life but passes over any discussion of Stein's valorization of daily living (see *Irresistible Dictation* 136, 140, 166-7).

In *The Geographical History of America*, flux and disjointed shifts in relation to time, ideas, and setting not only describe *what* the self experiences of the world but also *how* the self experiences what is external to it. In other words, disunity is integral to the subject's essential way of existing in the world. This disunity also provides the means for contravening social strictures and enabling the fruition of singularity. In *The Making of Americans*, Stein writes, "To the bourgeois mind that has within it a little of the fervor for diversity, there can be nothing more attractive than a strain of singularity that yet keeps well within the limits of conventional respectability a singularity that is, so to speak, well dressed and well set up" (21). In effect, Stein derides the notion of "singularity" that conforms to the material and ideological expectations of "respectability." Alternatively, she aspires towards a singularity that is "vital" and "passion[ate]" rather than "crazy, sporty, faddish, or a fashion, or low class distinction" (21).

Taking a cue from Jean-Luc Nancy, who describes singularity as "Not a particular, which comes to belong to a genre, but a unique property that escapes appropriation—an exclusive touch—and that, as such, is neither extracted or removed from, nor opposed to, a common ground," I read the equivocations and disjointedness of *The Geographical History of America* as enabling the emergence of the singularity of the subject (41). The idea of singularity is not concomitant with an essentialized, universalized essence. Instead, it describes the subject as co-conspirator with the world to make meaning, to make moments of singularity. Nancy contends that the singular "is that which occurs only once [*c'est ce qui n'a lieu qu'une fois*], at a single point (out of time and out of place, in short), that which is an exception" (41). The "once-ness" of singularity signifies the possibility of temporal and ideological suspension because the singular "tears itself out of the continuum—that is to say, in the first instance, to the unit as unicity and indifferentiation [*à l'unité en tant qu'unicité et indifférenciation*]" and exists as a "unit counted one by one" (Nancy 49, 42).

In *The Geographical History of America*, the subject's disunity and chaotic interiority place it "out of time and out of place." Being out of time and out of place liberates the self from the strictures of ideology; it is the seed of the self's singularity. Subjective instability creates the possibility of continual repetition without stultifying duplication because the self gives to and takes in every experience as a unique combination of meaning, intention, and motivations. In other words, each event becomes an epistemologically singular one and, in turn, gives to the self its sense of singularity. But while the individual's sense of self is in constant flux, the basic silhouette of the self endures, a silhouette that takes shape through the rhythm of the self's daily thoughts and actions.

Against this outline of the self, moments of “onceness” occur unexpectedly, giving rise to a subjective knowledge that is immediately apparent and true:

> I found that any kind of book if you read with glasses and somebody is cutting your hair and so you cannot keep the glasses on and you use your glasses as a magnifying glass and so read word by word reading word by word makes the writing that is not anything be something. (143)

The unexpected constraint of reading without eyeglasses gives rise to an extraordinary realization and produces an indubitable truth that transforms the subject’s relationship to words and the act of reading.

An anecdote about being surrounded by birds demonstrates the uniqueness of the self learning-in-progress. She says, “There are a great many birds in America but I did not notice them. I do notice them here. You notice birds if you sit with them” (75). This is because sitting amongst birds forces the self into a physical intimacy with its surroundings and focuses the self’s attention to the “twittering singing and flying” of these creatures (75). In this incident, Stein also implies that one must sometimes yield to objects and things in the world rather than imposing upon them a subjective belief because “They used to think that the world was there as we see it but it is not so the world is there as it is” (74). And if the self has an amenability to the world, this opens it up to revelatory experiences that are exceptional. These ruptures from the continuous stream of life help the self to reconfigure its ontological and epistemological grounding.

For Nancy, singularity is also a plurality because the "exceptional existence . . . implies a double articulation: that of the different times of a same 'I' and that of the different 'I-s'" (42, 44). Moreover, Nancy maintains that "[the singular] takes out the time [*fois*] itself, the circumstance, the occasion, which is to say the case or the occurrence, of the unitotality which would know no case (and which does not exist), or of a universality that would not make the world, that is to say, the differential opening of sense. Put differently, the singular assumes the limit; it gathers itself there and it borders alongside the spillout [*il borde le débordement*] of its force" (Nancy 49). In other words, the singular becomes the limit and "posits the limit as its own" in order to begin a "double end of birth and death, simultaneously symmetrical and dissymmetrical" (Nancy 43). The self, as posited by Nancy, is a plurality that renews and amends boundaries, limits, and edges.

In *The Geographical History of America*, the plurality of what Nancy calls the "different times of a same 'I' and that of the different 'I-s'" is materialized in the speaker's navigation of the conceptual limits of human nature and the human mind. She states, "oh dear does she does he does he does she know what the human mind is and if he does and if she does and if he does what is the human mind" (59). The anxiety of knowing is eased as the speaker comes to accept the unpredictability of the self and embraces the things that cannot be classified, i.e., reading and writing, the weather, romance, adventure, and superstitions (73, 80, 90, 108, 152, 162, 165). Stein also challenges static, non-reflexive formulations identity and knowledge by asking, "How do you like what you are./ And how are you what you are," (102). In effect, she implies that the self can never be one fixed thing because not only are its relationships to itself constantly shifting, its relationships to the world are in perpetual mutation.

Thus, contradictions become the norm because "Any way is another way if you say it the same way" (48). How the subject speaks can appear to be the same or "another way" if the conditions of speaking or perception differ, as they surely must, according to Stein. As a result, it seems perfectly valid to state at various points in the text that there is "no relation between human nature and the human mind" and that "there is always a relation between one thing and any other thing such as human nature and the human mind" (60, 89). These paradoxical statements emerge as evidence of a consciousness making and remaking its internal composition out of the incongruities of the world. As Bridgman observes, "since [Stein] usually chose to regard her statements as true to the moment, even those which turned out to be wrong possessed a validity for her equal to any conceived in certainty" (265). The constitution of both knowledge and the subject, then, is always contingent.

The self is prone to non-sequiturs, wild assertions about Franklin Roosevelt and Napoleon (170), superstitions, and free associations. These irruptions reveal the impossibility of objectifying knowledge or of dismissing things that are illogical:

> I did hear that a cuckoo not in a clock but a cuckoo that is a bird that sings cuckoo if you hear it sing for the first time in spring and you have money in your pocket you will have it all the year. I mean money.
>
> I always like to believe what I hear.
>
> That has something to do with superstition and something to do with identity. To like to believe what you hear. (137)

This passage is true only in so far as the moment is "real" for the individual, but the subject knows that this moment does not constitute knowledge because "to like to believe what you hear" is akin to "identity." Thus, this passage represents not a clear analysis that superstitions are untrue but, rather, an intuition that "to like to believe what you hear" is very much a self-motivating feat. However, what Adam Chalmers says about Benjamin's method in *The Arcades Project* might be applicable here: "intuition, understanding and reason exist on an equal footing" (46). I would add bodily competence to this list because, for Stein, it would seen that the parts of this experience (the cuckoo, its singing, listening to its song, springtime, and money) register as an exceptional experience, out-of-time and out-of-place, as Nancy would say.

Superstition represents a game that the subject plays in order to entertain the possibility of an alternative form of truth: "it is not concerned with being or not being true" (*GHA* 138). Consequently, Steins admires it because it exists "in itself because it is so true" (*GHA* 138). Stephanie L. Hawkins observes that these superstitious assertions "throw [. . .] into stark relief Stein's own attempts to chart the moment of knowing in vibrant words that rupture upon orthodox systems of belief, whether scientific or supernatural" (63). Hawkins further argues that "Stein's references to superstitious rituals and beliefs are features that call attention to the idiosyncratic narrative structure so characteristic of her later works and their eschewal of beginnings, middles, and ends. For Stein, the destruction of organic unity in literature also marked the demise of nineteenth-century narrative realism—a demise Stein was eager to hasten" (61). Stein's nonsensical utterances about superstition and belief disrupt the naturalized truths of scientific and causal explication and reveal the liminal space between logic and chance, a space of intuition that is often overwhelmed by the rational impulse.

Not everything can be explained and not everything is explained in *The Geographical History of America.* This is the essence of the text. The firm declaration which begins the book, "In the month of February were born Washington Lincoln and I," seduces us into thinking that the self is placing itself *in* time and history (45). This notion is quickly dispelled as the speaker accrues an astounding set of contradictory beliefs about human nature and the human mind as well as knowledge, religion, propaganda, money, writing, romance, etc. By the end of the text, the "I" can only equivocally state, "I am not sure that is not the end" (235). These evasions self-reflexively defy semantic and subjective closure, and so the self gives up the pretence of authority, confessing, instead, "I do not know where I am going but I am on my way and then suddenly well not perhaps suddenly but perhaps yes I do know where I am going and I do not like it like that" (84). Even the sense of "going" is fraught with confusion, a confusion that affirms the messiness of experience.

This is also true of the speaker's ability to master language and thought. Mocking her own control over the "masterpiece," the voice comments,

> This chapter is to be all about when words how words do words look like that.
>
> Like it did when I looked at it, there there where I saw it.
>
> Beneath me when I was above it. (65)

Though this passage begins with the possibility of an explanation, it immediately overturns this expectation because the chapter morphs into something else, something "Like it did when I looked at it." Here, the protean nature of words and the self's perception of them exemplify epistemological openness. When the voice asks, "Do I do this so that I can go," the answer is of course no. But the lesson that the writer learns is how to come to knowledge, or how to ask questions in such a way that does not give in to the narrative traps of language.

For Stein, the purpose of writing is to construct "words which were the words that made whatever I looked at look like itself" ("Portraits and Repetition" 115). Writing, like the human mind, "is neither remembering nor forgetting neither beginning or ending" (*GHA* 142). Stein believes that this kind of writing will endure because it is the kind that "any human mind years after or years before can read, thousands of years or no years it makes no difference" (*GHA* 108). This type of writing is a "thing-in-itself," that is, a thing denuded of time.

Writing is a form of materializing a new selfhood as well as a new mode of knowledge.

The artistic self that creates without relying on memory and without serving "mammon" produces something that is both ontologically and epistemologically singular. This is done by truly understanding the complex relations within oneself in order to produce "what is really exciting. That is what he is inside him, that is what an artist really is inside him, he is exciting, and if he is not there is nothing to any of it" ("Portraits and Repetition" 114). Because "There is no real reality to a really imagined life any more," Stein sets out to make the "really imagined life" the new reality (*GHA* 66). In an unexpected move, the "really imagined life" is a crime story, where

> This whole book now is going to be a detective story of how to write.
>
> A play of the relation of human nature to the human mind.
>
> And a poem of how to begin again.
>
> And a description of how the earth looks as you look at it which is perhaps a play if it can be done in a day and is perhaps a detective story if it can be found out. (112)

What Stein likes most about the idea of crime stories, though, is the fact that in them "being dead is not ending it is being dead and being dead is something" (142). For Stein, to begin with a dead body is to begin with an erasure of social contingency because "the one that is dead has no time and no identity for him to them and yet they think they can remember" (205). Steiner puts it this way: "the detective story was the only possible form of narrative in the modern world because it eliminated character—the 'hero' being dead at the start," and the narrative development of beginning, middle, and end depends upon understanding the action rather than the internal motives of a subject (Steiner 164). In other words, the subject as key-stone of meaning is ruptured. Bruce Goebel's postulation that Stein feared death must be amended, then (Goebel 238). She desired a symbolic death that would put to rest but also launch a beginning that is inherently temporally uncertain.

Stein's belief that "the human mind is not like being in danger but being killed" suggests that the human mind is free from the trappings of "personality" (56, 171). When "there is no remembering and no forgetting," the human mind is free from fears, worries, and the need to please (56). The human mind "knows" whereas human nature "does not know that if every one did not die there would be no room for those who did live now" (45). In addition, "After all would do we like to live to have lived, then if we do then everybody else has had to die and we have to cry because we too one day we too will have to die otherwise the others who will like to live could not come by" (46). The subject's ambivalence about this knowledge of its mortality is offset by the primal desire to live in order to create masterpieces, or something that will endure.

Literary masterpieces not only have the power to arrest time but also to endure as a singular object unassimilated by time or ideology. Stein believes that masterpieces

> do not exist because of their identity, that is what any one remembering then remembered then, they do not exist by human nature because everybody always knows everything there is to know about human nature, they exist because they came to be as something that is an end in itself and in that respect it is opposed to the business of living which is relation and necessity. That is what a master-piece is not although it may easily be what a master-piece talks about. ("What are Masterpieces" 151)

"An end in itself" denotes an object that, though coming out of "relation and necessity," embodies a perpetual present and a "flatness" that relinquishes historical context in order to obtain present-completeness. Moreover, the masterpiece is "a thing that existed so completely inside in it and it was it was so completely inside that really looking and listening and talking were not a way any longer needed for me to know about this thing about movement being existing" ("Portraits and Repetition" 121). That is to say, the masterpiece is not a transcendental signifier but it does mean more than the sum of its conceiver and perceiver. It is a singularity that, in Nancy's words, "tears itself out of the continuum" to exist as an ever-renewed moment rather than as a historical event (49).

Masterpieces are impervious to their material and discursive locality (their existence in a gallery or a home, their apprehension by viewers, their insertion into human and art history) and exist only in-themselves. Likewise, the human mind escapes the weight of social time by postponing time. It is not without time, but it resists temporal succession. Accordingly, "Any minute then is anything if there is a human mind" (67). On the other hand, "Any minute is not anything so then there is human nature" (67). The human mind and not human nature makes use of the full measure of a minute and neglects the progression of time, which denotes that the human mind coordinates time circumspectly, counting the full value of each moment. The human mind is ultimately an experience of contingent simultaneities because "the minute it means anything it has nothing to do with the human mind" (82).

As the container for all the paradoxes of the relationship between human nature and the human mind, including their supposed binaries and contradictions, *The Geographical History of America* advances a self that is immersed in its disunity, but also a self that refuses instrumentality. It embraces its disjunctiveness as the limit that needs to be grasped in order to understand the boundaries of existence. Thus, both the self and knowledge become radically contingent and in flux. But the self's unique and fragmented relationships to the world are the source of its self-continuation and also break from conventional markers of identity, such as gender, age, nationality, and birthright, because it approaches the world as discreet moments. It absorbs these boundaries and discreetly transforms these limits into what Nancy calls a "birth" that heralds a new articulation of the "I" (43). This guarantees a singularity of subject-hood that is able to construct an intersubjective framework without domination.

### *Ida: "Who Is Careful?"*

Now let us make it all careful and clear.

Everybody is an Ida. (*How Writing is Written* 46)

In this chapter, I read *Ida* (1941) against the grain of some feminist recuperations of Stein, as evidence of Stein's desire to go beyond gendered rhetoric. With the rise of Second Wave feminism, literary critics marshaled Stein's writing as exemplary of women's resistance to male-dominated society. Dekoven, for example, comments that "Stein's anti-patriarchal rebellion . . . [is] in opposition to the notions of women which patriarchy provides" (*A Different* 37). Taylor, too, notes that "the narrative incoherence of the text enacts an incoherence of gendered identities" (29). And Fifer translates the gender dichotomy into a sexual dichotomy and judges that "unreadability" signifies lesbianism in Stein's writing (13). Taking phallocentrism as the principal organizing structure of Western society, these feminists posit that resistance is intrinsic to Stein's writing in the same way that gender was intrinsic to her life.

Stein's writing is almost always inserted into the woman-as-difference paradigm whereby women's marginal status becomes constitutive of the definition of women. In addition, this alterity is embraced as inherently subversive against oppressive gender hierarchies. However, while this notion of woman-as-alterity weighs in as a way to talk about the constructedness of gender categories, the notion also implicitly regulates a causal and "natural" relationship between biological sex, social gender, and political status. That is to say, one is born of the female sex, one is then shaped into an appropriate gender, which consequently defines one's political status as inferior, other, and peripheral to the dominant centre. Woman-as-alterity implies woman-as-lack. This kind of focus on gender difference (which is largely a focus on the ways in which women as a political category exist at a distance away from the centre of symbolic and figurative power) forecloses the possibility of real differential relationships that derive not from (woman's) lack. Though these readings are obviously important to our understanding of Stein's work, I would like to suggest a way out of the negative-theory of difference (i.e., anything not male, white, heterosexual, affluent, and Western is deemed *negatively* different). I argue that Stein abandons the paradigm of gender in order to reconfigure the shape of the subject in general.

In *Ida*, Stein destroys the discursive subject in order to redraw the boundaries of intersubjectivity. By dispossessing the female subject of social and historical connectedness, as well as the security of familial protection, Stein creates a non-discursive relationality. Ida, the central character, must come to terms with the alterity of the other as well as the irreducible difference between two beings. She learns that she cannot impose her will on others because they have their particular lived competence. She evolves from a solipsistic self—not making friends, not belonging to a community, not marrying or establishing a family of her own—into an "anti-subject" who refuses the ideological role proper to her station in society. As a result, Stein liberates Ida from myths of identity, particularly gendered identity, which enables a temporary escape from ideological pressures.

While critics from DeKoven to Ruddick, Fifer, and Melanie Taylor argue that Stein delineates a specifically gendered and sexual rejection of patriarchal representations of men and women and heterosexuality, I contend that Stein's writing develops a resistance against identity itself, in so far as all identity-positions that are conventionally available are founded on myths or fantasies of the collective. Stein's representations in *Ida* seize an experience of intersubjectivity that is not simply an equation of woman=subjection and man=power but, rather, of (anonymous) body+intentionality+object (in the world). For Merleau-Ponty, phenomenological intentionality is indicative of a world that is "ready-made" and of a world wherein the self cannot "possess" or impose meaning dogmatically (*Phenomenology* xvii-xviii). Drawing from Gadamer's notion of the interpretive horizon and Merleau-Ponty's idea about the phenomenological horizon, I demonstrate that Stein moves towards a subject as a whole, unified self and wholly present, rather than a lack. This wholeness is not a repetition of an organic or Romantic ideal but, rather, a lived wholeness that incorporates Nancy's idea of the "double articulation: that of the different times of a same 'I' and that of the different 'I-s'" (44).

While *Three Lives* suggested, in a manner, that sexual *jouissance* could offer an escape from ideological objectification, *Ida* refuses this model. As a libidinal economy, *jouissance* implies a personal autonomy that ultimately gets re-invested in operations of power. These forms of transgression give to the self a sense of individuality that is only a simulacrum of agency, because, as Žižek notes in *The Plague of Fantasies*, power depends on the fantasy of personal choice and freedom (20). In other words, the illusion of free will and volition produces disciplined subjects, or subjects who are habituated to think two things: that they are *choosing* their identifications and that they desire these identities. Žižek further observes that the work of fantasy does not produce a self for our personal purposes but, rather, "tells me what I am to my others" so that I can understand my role and character in the intersubjective game (9).

In the first half of the novel, the world does not guarantee coherent or intentional meaning for Ida and she struggles to learn to integrate what lies outside of herself. Integration is a struggle for her because her family, what we may think of as the first and primary apparatus of our socialization, fails to instruct her about the meaning of life, death, mourning, marriage, and even friendship. She has little connection to others because not only do her parents "easily lose one another," they mysteriously "[go] off on a trip and never [come] back" (8). She is forced to live with one relation after another but, being "old and weak," they die and so Ida "loses" both her great-aunt and her grandfather (10). Her transitory way of life becomes normal so that "it was always natural to live anywhere she lived and she soon forgot the other addresses" (11).

The instability of Ida's home-life stunts her symbolic education and the mysterious circumstance surrounding family members' deaths and disappearances contributes to Ida's unease. When visitors come bearing orange blossoms for her dying great-aunt, Ida only registers that it "was not Tuesday" and orange blossoms make her "feel funny" (9). From an "old woman," Ida hears stories about her great-aunt who "had had something happen to her oh many years ago, it was a soldier, and then the great-aunt had had little twins born to her and then she had quietly, the twins were dead then, born so, she had buried them under a pear tree and nobody knew" (7).[40] The passive construction of "the great-aunt had had little twins" obscures the trauma of the past. But, at the same time, it highlights the strangeness of allowing the past to author the present, of living in the shadow of the repressed event as though meaning is always before or after us, never in the present moment. The interruptions "the twins were dead then" and "born so" sharply highlight the mystification and silencing of errant females.

Her family's prohibition of speaking directly about women's sexual and reproductive experiences teaches Ida about normative gender and sexual codes. The uncanny pear tree is not only a (paradoxical) substitute for the family tree but also for the apple tree in the Garden of Eden. Moreover, references to the cherry and apple trees obliquely point to Eve and the sin of female sexuality (9). The myth of sin conveys to Ida the social consensus about the danger of being female and of female sexuality. And, as a result, she learns what she is or would be to others, to paraphrase Žižek. Furthermore, the idea of the forbidden fruit haunts Ida and so she "always hesitated before eating" (42). However, Ida's hesitance suggests a guardedness about these myths of femininity. In prefering to go "out walking instead of sitting in a garden," Ida also rejects the biblical narrative of woman-as-sin (89).

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[40] Stein's squinting modifiers not only trade on the ambiguous nature of English syntax but on the temporality of reading and sense. Though "[n]obody believed the old woman perhaps it was true but nobody believed it," the family "always looked at every pear tree and had a funny feeling" (7). Stein suspends conventional, syntactical precision by omitting the comma that would have clearly demarcated the relation of the word "perhaps" to the part of the sentence. In doing so, Stein conveys another instance in which women's voices are silenced or negated. The old woman retains an important part of Ida's family history but her version of events is emphatically denied by social consensus.

The hardness of signifiers, the power of the symbolic, bewilders Ida for much of the first half of the novel and leaves her unable to articulate the specific nature of her vague feelings. This denial of female sexuality informs Ida that people and words are equally ephemeral. Ida simply learns that pear trees are "funny things" (10). Her family's repression of its history of illegitimate and possibly stillborn children teaches Ida to be wary of speaking. She lives in a mute-like state and seems to speak only to her dog, Love (10). Ida often refrains from entering into a conversation with people, speaking only to herself because she "understood what she was saying, she knew who she was and she knew it was better that nobody came there" (47). Any interpellation by or recognition from the outside world frightens her: "She saw a little boy and when he waved to her she would not look his way" (8). And, whenever she witnesses something new, like "a man carrying an advertisement on his back, a sandwich man," she shrinks back from the experience and "very quickly went home" (16).

Ida's failure to integrate into the world results in a loss of self. In avoiding the realness of the other, Ida experiences the world as a perpetual shock. She lives so completely in her head, finding herself so "interesting" that she "was always talking to herself," despite the fact that conversations with herself "made her cry" (44). Ida's solipsism suppresses her symbolic development, which, rather than liberating her from the demands of the ideological subject, contracts the possibility of her being. As another character judges, her attitude "is not interesting and I am not listening" (48). Ida responds that "you do not know what you are saying, if I talk you have to listen to what I say, there is nothing else you can do," but the man is not convinced and he leaves Ida sitting by herself (48). Thus, when confronted with the freedom of the other, Ida is *at a loss* because she is unable to award to others a reciprocal recognition. By reciprocal recognition, I mean an intersubjective ethos that sustains the other as well as oneself.

Reciprocal recognition is the basis of community-making and speaks to a willingness to suspend totalitarian impulses to impose our will over others. In the words of Hans Georg Gadamer,

> Transposing ourselves consists neither in the empathy of one individual for another nor in subordinating another person to our own standards; rather, it always involves rising to a higher universality that overcomes not only our particularity but also that of the other. The concept of "horizon" suggests itself because it expresses superior breadth of vision that the person who is trying to understand must have. To acquire a horizon means that one learns to look beyond what is close at hand—not in order to look away from it but to see it better, within a larger whole and in truer proportion. (305)

Gadamer calls for an investment in the larger whole not as a disavowal of imbalances in power and empowerment but as an investment in the fundamental irreducibility of the "other." Gadamer states, "To reach an understanding in a dialogue is not merely a matter of putting oneself forward and successfully asserting one's own point of view, but being transformed into a communion in which we do not remain what we were" (379). Reciprocal recognition, then, opens up the possibility of transformations that substantively change the make-up of the community. This also changes the nature of socially shared fantasies, reconstructing a less inflexible collective world-view. In so far as collective fantasies establish the boundaries for subjects and order how subjects may act with one another, Gadamer's observations help to undermine the will to dominate. If we were to put into application Gadamer's method, fantasies would become heuristic and their workings more transparent due to the underpinning assumption of mutual transformation.

This idea about interpretive horizon also throws new light on an interesting problem in Stein's late novel concerning the pitfalls of intersubjectivity. I say pitfalls because Stein repeatedly comments on the dangerous nature of an audience, for "One of the things that [she] discovered in lecturing was that gradually one ceased to hear what one said one heard what the audience hears one say" ("What Are Masterpieces" 149). After the success of *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, Stein feared that the pressures of success and publicity would change her writing. In "What Are Masterpieces," Stein treats the idea of an audience as a threat because "When you are writing before there is an audience anything written is as important as any other thing and you cherish anything and everything that you have written. After an audience begins, naturally they create something that is they create you, and so not everything is so important" (156). The quandary for Stein, as Kirk Curnutt documents, is the danger of submitting artistic authority to an external force, especially when that force is more interested in personal biography than the merit of the work (303).

Stein attempts to defy the demands of the audience, "but when your public knows you and does not want to pay for you and when your public knows you and does want to pay for you, you are not the same you" (*Everybody's Autobiography* 44-45). The problem is not only one of self-authority but also self-authorization. Fame challenged Stein's conviction that she was in complete control of her self and her artistic construction. For Stein, when there is a "public," the writer cannot be certain that she has not been compromised by other voices and pressures. As a result, the individual expression of the writer may be usurped by the demand of "serving Mammon" ("What is English Literature" 32). The struggle with "the outside and the inside of success" is a constant concern and manifests itself in *Ida* in the creation of an imaginary twin (*Everybody's Autobiography* 47).

Conceived as an exploration of the effects of publicity, *Ida* is her attempt to solve the problem of the individual in relation to herself and her society. Begun in May 1937, the novel proceeded erratically with Stein battling the generic demands of a novel. She felt unable to grasp the non-essentialized essence of the novel and proceeded, instead, to write the opera "Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights," which is about knowledge and the split between public and private identity (Neuman, "Would a Viper" 169). Neuman argues that "Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights" presents "the hallowed and worshipped Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel" who are sanctified but deceived because they have two names ("Would a Viper" 183). Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel are successfully seduced by a sinister "man from overseas" and, according to Neuman, "lose[. . .] the last trace of either public identity or private entity" ("Would a Viper" 190). Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel are overtaken by the biblical and gender myths prescribed by society while Ida successfully maintains her core as well as a "public" self that interacts with the outside world.

The novel, described by critics as growing out of Stein's self-doubt about her new-found fame at the age of sixty, deals obliquely with the relations between art and culture. The novel flirts with the *bildungsroman* genre in order to tackle the problematic relationship woman writers had with social and cultural ideologies. Stein addresses the trouble of being a female creator who must break with the tradition of woman as muse or object of the masculine artistic gaze, as well as the derision of woman as imitator rather than creator.[41] Because the female subject is always already an object, Ida desires to "have a twin" in order to evade ideological subjection (9).

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[41] According to Aránzaza Usandizaga, the female *bildungsroman* "serves specific cultural and political functions for modernist women writers. Women use the genre for self-creation and self-understanding; not as an escape from the real world (as do male writers of modernism) but as a way to approach experience with the hope of changing it" (326). See "The Female Bildungsroman at the Fin de Siècle: The 'Utopian Imperative' in Anita Brookner's *A Closed Eye* and *Fraud*." *Critique* 39: 4 (Summer 1998): 325-338.

The doubled-self refracts the regulating power of the social gaze so that Ida may roam the streets at night, talk to soldiers, or jump into a stranger's car as she wishes (15-22). Early on in life, she witnesses with great concern the disciplining gaze a policeman casts on a homeless woman in a park, and, as a result, Ida learns the necessity of deflecting attention away from herself (15). Ida rationalizes that had she Winnie, "if anything happened nobody could tell anything and lots of things are going to happen" (11).[42] However, Ida's twin is appropriated by the very ideological economy that she is supposed to countermand for her creator.

Initially, twinning is a manner of duplication that would theoretically solve the problem of solipsism, so "as Ida came, with her came her twin, so there she was Ida-Ida" (7). This strategy fails because it does not actually move beyond "what is close at hand." The twin sustains Ida's circumscribed horizon and protects Ida's subjective integrity (from symbolic loss) rather than enlarging her vision. In the beginning, it affords Ida the possibility of living a more free and full life, and she thinks, "when I am a twin one of us can go out and one of us can stay in" (13). And though Ida remains largely passive after the appearance of Winnie, her twin, so-called because she wins beauty contests and is inherently comely, the fantasy seems to secure the self against internal and external anxieties. The doubled-self protects Ida from having to deal with the loneliness and confusion of her life. However, because any given self is socially porous, the separation of the self into public and private halves cannot hold. The construction of a public self defers confrontations through the use of inarticulateness and confusion but ultimately does not erase turmoil. Thus, as Bridgman argues, "the twin is explicitly conceived for the purpose of protection" but, realizing that this self can obliterate her autonomy, Ida "drops it" (308).

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[42] Rhetorically, Stein's affirmation of the negative ("nobody could tell anything") nonetheless brings about a condition of positivity and plenitude. Ida proclaims "Never again will I not be a twin" (27).

It is not autonomy that Ida obtains but invisibility and stasis when Winnie obtains fame and recognition for her beauty (23). As Winnie "began to be known," "Nobody looked at Ida," and no one could tell her apart from Winnie (26, 42). She becomes the shadow of her copy, and her privacy and sense of self are threatened. When a strange man tracks Winnie to Ida's home, Ida's personal space and her sense of self-integrity are shaken by the mis-recognition. And, when an officer says to Ida, "I know what you mean. Winnie is your name and that is what you mean by your not being here," Ida feels "faint" and "afraid" (29). The twin becomes disturbing precisely because the famous twin fixes Ida, forces Ida to be a repetition of herself (26-27). The paradox of the twin, then, is that though it was created in order to maintain Ida's integrity, it becomes the very weapon that could destroy the self. This harks back to Stein's fear of an audience shaping the way that one writes and exists. The "public self" overshadows and denies the private self because the public self has the power of direct conversation with the social and symbolic world. A self that remains strictly private and personal becomes a phantom of a being, un-articulable and unarticulated to others in the social fabric.

Stein also makes us aware of the incredible gap in *Ida* between "having a twin" (11) and "being a twin" (18). In conceiving her twin, Ida still believes herself to be the "original" Ida, and Winnie a copy. Though the idea of complete creative control over Winnie initially excites Ida, because "If you make her you can kill her," she soon discovers that her creation has its own autonomy and once her creation enters the symbolic economy, Ida is no longer in complete control of it (11). The twin as a repetition and a derivative noun traps Ida in a socially-static identity signed "Winnie."

Stein's play with language is marvellous here because "Winning Winnie" embodies the duality of the word "to win": on the one hand, to win is to succeed; on the other hand, to belong to or to be usurped by an imaginary twin named Winnie implies the tragic failure of an experiment in solipsism. The function of the noun and the verb are radically opposed in Stein's writing. The noun can only ever be celebrated in poetry when it is "concerned with using with abusing, with losing with wanting, with denying with avoiding with adoring with replacing the noun" ("Poetry and Grammar" 138). Nouns are uninteresting for Stein because they cannot make mistakes, nor can they match the power of verbs to "change to look like themselves or to look like something else" ("Poetry and Grammar" 127). When Ida is mistaken for "Winning" Winnie, she realizes that she has been reduced to a noun and Winnie, the performing verb. As a result, Ida becomes increasingly secretive about her name and frets about other people's names. She tells a young officer, "said Ida, if I knew your name I would not be interested in you, no, I would not" (30). And though she does marry, she thinks, "marriage meant changes and changes meant names and after all she had so many changes but she did just have one name Ida and she liked it to stay with her" (16). The proper name, given to us by our parents or guardians, is the official mark by which society "hails" us, but when society mis-hails, it creates the feeling that "every now and then she was lost," that is, alienated from herself (22).[43]

This alienation is the ultimate lesson for Ida. She must acknowledge that without support from social apparatuses, the fantasy of self-empowerment can only turn into a hallucinatory nightmare. The imaginary twinning of the self results in greater objectification that re-installs historical subjectivity; the division of the self into public and private identities fixes the double-being into its respective parts, making it easier for the external world to regulate and interpret Ida. Not only is she imprisoned by Winnie's celebrity, Ida is estranged from herself and scared to engage with the world for fear of mis-recognitions. No discontinuities (because people "echo" one another) in order to enable groups to "transcend history and difference" (292, 288). Scott points out that First and Second Wave feminists depended on the coherence of "woman" as a political category. In saying this, she identifies one of the setbacks in contemporary feminism, that is, our awareness that differences cannot always be transcended. But Rita Felski points out that differences are fertile sites of renegotiations that enable important dialogue and critiques to take place ("Doxa" 12).[46]

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[43] Hailing is an idea that can be traced to Althusser's "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" (in *Lenin and Philosophy*. Trans. Ben Brewster. London: New Left Books, 1971, 136-170). However, Jing Tsu points out the subversive potential of the subject's misrecognition of its "hailing" by ideological state apparatuses. See "Pleasure in Failure: The Guilty Subject in Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Austin" (*Substance* 85 (1998): 89-95).

While Scott theorizes fantasy as a spectral apparition, an illusory appearance of unity mobilized by a politicized identity group, the crux of her idea about the consolidating power of group fantasies is still useful for understanding Stein's representation of Ida's exile from various communities (Scott 288). Because Ida cannot read social codes properly, she is rejected from the consolidated social fantasy. As a result, she must seek other avenues of belonging. Ida's expulsion demarcates patriarchal society's failure to integrate its members into its fantasy about the nuclear family. Stein's assault on family repeatedly appears in her writing. In *The Geographical History of America*, she writes, "when you are acquainted with a whole family you can forget about them" (106); in *Painted Lace*, "Every adolescent has that dream every century has that dream every revolution has that dream, to destroy the family" (93); and, most famously, in *Everybody's Autobiography*, "There is too much fathering going on just now and there is no doubt about it fathers are depressing" (133). In *Ida*, more importantly, though the heroine loses both her family and her public identity, "Ida did not go on looking for what she had lost, she was too excited" (27). Ida's excitement is the result of sovereignty enabled by loss, and, in the second half of the novel, she meets Andrew who seems just as severed from family and other social institutions.

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[46] Felski also quotes Charles Taylor, who says, "the defense of difference does not preclude but, rather, presumes a shared horizon of meaning against which this defense is articulated. At any given moment, there is an infinite array of differences in the world. The very identification of certain traits-gender, class, age, sexual preference, ethnic background-as more important than others—shoe size, ability to sing in tune—necessarily involves an appeal to intersubjective norms. 'Defining myself means finding what is significant in my difference from others'" (cited in Felski, "Doxa" 14).

As Stein explodes the fantasy of belonging and social identification in *Ida*, the subjective options open up for Ida. Ida's troubled life changes after she realizes the inadequacy of the figurative twin and the self-referential self. Every time Ida thinks "I am here and I know it, if I go away I will not like it because I am so used to my being here," she feels fear and cries (42). As Ida moves from city to city and encounters a variety of people, she happens on a "hilly country" one day and she sits on the hillside with two brothers until one goes away and she remains with the other (44). They remain there for an indefinite amount of time and "They did not go to sleep but they almost stopped breathing" (46). On the hillside, there is nothing to say because the social, symbolic world ceases to exist nor does it have much import for the way that people interact with one another. As Ida sheds herself of genealogical and social identities, paying "no attention" to ideological demands, she becomes part of the physical landscape, which becomes a "participant" to the making of the individual rather than simply a backdrop (46).

In this scene on the hilltop, Ida learns to extrapolate from these raw experiences a sense of symmetry with other beings as well as a non-reducibility: no two people can experience this event in this exact way, nor can they assimilate it in the same manner. The man who sits next to her on the hillside, too, has his own interpretations of this moment because he makes statements to which "Ida paid no attention" (46). She refrains from entering into a conversation with him, speaking up only after he has gone away because she "understood what she was saying, she knew who she was and she knew it was better that nobody came there. If they did she would not be there, not just yet" (47). Stein signals the uniqueness of this experience by rendering Ida and the stranger's co-existence as a non-event. This non-coincidence portrays the possibility of relating to the other as part of a continuum of landscape rather than as part of a social classification. If the dissymmetry of social identities is highlighted rather than obscured, then the security of phallocentric hierarchies crumbles.

Sylvia Stoller argues that Maurice Merleau-Ponty's ideas about dissymmetry in *The Visible and the Invisible* help us to understand its positive power. For Stoller, recognizing asymmetry as a fundamental aspect of interpersonal relations prevents reduction of others to our own senses or rationales. She states, "Using Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, I argue that the ontological asymmetry between the sexes results from a bodily relation between sexual beings" ("Asymmetrical" 10). Merleau-Ponty contends that the "inevitable dissymmetry of the I-Other relation" counter-weighs the fact that "I live my perception from within, and, from within, it has an incomparable power of ontogenesis" (*Visible* 80, 58). However, while he states that our perceptions are not comparable—because of corporeal situatedness—projection enables us to communicate and make meaning with others. The body is the common site of projective understanding and by "throw[ing] out its own background," the body enacts a decisive intentionality, or an intent-to-make-meaning, by collecting and selecting "meaning diffused through the object" and by the object (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology* 111, 132).

Merleau-Ponty's assessment that dissymmetry is universal and should form the basis of our intersubjective relationship also allows for a deeper appreciation of Stein's tendency towards radical non-referentiality. Non-referentiality is a means of rupturing the social consolidation of meaning and of evading conventional subject-positions. However, Merleau-Ponty's idea is not without controversy. Feminists have debated the usefulness of Merleau-Ponty's description of the body in a world that is clearly not neutral or equal in terms of the body politic. Shannon Sullivan argues that "Merleau-Ponty's account of intersubjectivity is built upon the domination of others" because the body is "anonymous" and non-specific (1). Furthermore, she observes that Merleau-Ponty's articulation of my own body's intentionality or projection obscures "particularities of gender and upbringing" so that I am likely to run the risk of misunderstanding or imposing on others what I interpret through my body (7). This, however, can be corrected by re-inventing the ways that we perceive and receive information. For Merleau-Ponty, "Perception has an analytic function in the composition of knowledge, and is not the first way to access the object" because it usually involves amalgamating "two images [to obtain] the idea of one object a distance away" (*Phenomenology* 17, 33). By reducing perceptions to either an explicatory "interpretation" or "hypothesis," "we construct perception instead of revealing its distinctive working; we miss once more the basic operation which infuses meaning (*sens*) into the sensible, and which is taken for granted by any logical mediation or any psychological causality" (*Phenomenology* 33, 34). Merleau-Ponty, therefore, decries the powers of logic and causality which he feels result in precisely the domination suggested by Sullivan.

In response to Sullivan, Sylvia Stoller suggests that the anonymous body is not equivalent with the neutral body because Merleau-Ponty insists on the "situatedness" of bodies in a horizon of meaning ("Reflections" 176). For example, Merleau-Ponty argues that the separation between the subject (perceiver) and object (perceived) miscalculates the operation of our visual intention because "[t]o pay attention is not merely further to elucidate pre-existing data, it is to bring about a new articulation of them by taking them as *figures*. They are preformed only as *horizons*, they constitute in reality new regions in the total world" (*Phenomenology* 30). Moreover, he explains that "since in attention I experience an elucidation *of* the object, the perceived object must already contain the intelligible structure which it reveals" (*Phenomenology* 27). In other words, the world around us is inherently sense-filled so that in any intersubjective experience, there is an exchange of significations—beyond language—at the deepest level of communication. Objects have their own meaning-in-the-world and "consciousness is no less intimately linked with objects of which it is unheeding than with those which interest it" (*Phenomenology* 28). Thus, we grasp ourselves and our world intimately and we begin with a subjectivity that is pre-personal, or, in Merleau-Ponty's words, "given to itself" (*Phenomenology* 352-53).

Stoller's most interesting and useful analysis of Merleau-Ponty concerns his theory about the irreversibility of our subjective, lived positions. That is to say, our experiences are unique to us because of the way that our bodies interact with the horizon and the social that is "already there when we come to know or judge it" (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology* 362). This lived experience cannot be replicated because if I imagine myself in someone else's place, then I do so from my unique perspective. As a result, Stoller writes, "there is a double non-coincidence, i.e., also a double difference: one in relation to the other and one in relation to myself" ("Reflections" 177).

Merleau-Ponty's contention that dissymmetry is universal, or at least general, has also brought on charges of his blindness to difference. By not heeding discursive or causal, psychological explanations, Merleau-Ponty assumes that bodies interact in a neutralized, discursive field. For example, Irigaray remarks that "Merleau-Ponty's whole analysis is marked by [. . .] labyrinthine solipsism. Without the other, and above all the other of sexual difference, isn't it impossible to find a way out" of his description of the reversibility of a subject seeing and being seen (*An Ethics* 157)? Because Merleau-Ponty is more interested in delineating "'in me' [. . .] the permanent horizon of all my *cogitationes* and [. . .] a dimension in relation to which I am constantly situating myself," the conditions for relating to the other and the condition of differences are secondary in his philosophy (*Phenomenology* xiii). This results in "no possibility for sexual difference . . . since there is no possibility for the subject and the other to coincide or interact in any way. One or the other disappears" (Kozel 115).

However, Judith Butler interjects that the "closure" of the "selfsame touching and touched body, seeing and seen," implicates the toucher and seer in the world so that the world is not "reducible to oneself" ("Sexual Difference" 117, 118). Moreover, she objects to the description of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy as solipsistic because in his description of the relationship of the left and right hands, there is an important "noncoincidence with oneself" that resists (en)closure ("Sexual Difference" 123, 124).[47] Non-coincidence here must not be conflated with alienation for alienation speaks of a psychic disjuncture within oneself, or a refusal of the self's total-ness. Non-coincidence refers to the unique corporeal truth that is singular to each one of us. This corporeal specificity is never closed-off, in-itself, because it is in perpetual contact with things, geography, vegetation, and people. Non-substitutionality, then, is a form of conceptualizing otherness without closing-off the reality of the outside.

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[47] The passage that Butler speaks about is in *The Visible and the Invisible*, "My left hand is always on the verge of touching my right hand touching the things, but I never reach coincidence; the coincidence eclipses at the moment of realization. . . . The incessant escaping is not a failure . . . is not an ontological void . . . it is spanned by the total being of my body, and by that of the world" (146-147).

For Merleau-Ponty, the fact that the body is "the third term" in the horizon of meaning (the other and the physical ground being the other two) signifies a negation of the solipsistic self. The body always "projects itself into the environment in the shape of cultural objects" and performs "spontaneous acts through which man has patterned his life deposited, like some sediment, outside himself and lead[s] an anonymous existence as things" (*Phenomenology* 101, 354, 348). The body is a "potential movement" that reckons with the possible and gives to us an understanding of the other (*Phenomenology* 109). For Merleau-Ponty, "the body unites us directly with the things [of the world] through its own ontogenesis" because the body is part of the "flesh of the visible" (*Visible* 136). In other words, the one who inhabits, sees, and touches the world is in turn inhabited, incorporated, and constituted by this world. In addition, the specificity of the body is not only the place of universality, it is also the ground of non-substitutionality in Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*. Because my own body "is always near me, always there for me, . . . *with* me," my experiences cannot be substituted with another's (*Phenomenology* 90). This not only signifies that "the other will never exist for us as we exist ourselves" because "our situations cannot be superimposed on each other," but also that we cannot simply exchange one bodily competence for another, despite the fact that every "living body has the same structure as mine" (*Phenomenology* 433, 356, 353).

In *Volatile Bodies*, Elizabeth Grosz, following Merleau-Ponty, states,

> I will deny that there is the 'real,' material body on the one hand and its various cultural and historical representations on the other. It is my claim . . . that these representations and cultural inscriptions quite literally constitute bodies and help to produce them as such. The bodies in which I am interested are culturally, sexually, racially specific bodies, the mobile and changeable terms of cultural production. As an essential internal condition of human bodies, a consequence perhaps of their organic openness to cultural completion, bodies must take the social order as their productive nucleus. Part of their own 'nature' is an organic or ontological 'incompleteness' or lack of finality, an amenability to social completion, social ordering and organization. (*Volatile* x-xi)

We see in *Ida* that what she is continually "waiting" for may be this "completion," not in order to be totalized but to be comprehensible in social exchange (47). However, being open to social ordering exposes the self to being over-determined by social classifications, and, as a result, Ida must be cautious:

> Who is careful.
> Well in a way Ida is.
> She lives where she is not.
> Not what.

> Not careful.
>
> Oh yes that is what they say.
>
> Not careful.
>
> Of course not.
>
> Who is careful.
>
> That is what they said.
>
> And the answer was.
>
> Ida said.
>
> Oh yes, careful.
>
> Oh yes, I can almost cry. (63)

Ida's search for completion, through marriage and travel, without an understanding of her own situatedness or self-constitution, results only in failed marriages. Ida's marriages to the three men before Andrew come out of an impulse to please others (a reversal of her earlier desire to only please herself with her imaginary twin). However, this approach means that

> Ida often met men and some of them hoped she would get something for them. She always did, not because she wanted them to have it but because she always did it when it was wanted.
>
> Just when it was not at all likely Ida was lost, lost they said, oh yes lost, how lost, why just lost. Of course she is lost. Yes of course she is lost.
>
> Ida led a very easy life, that is she got up and sat up and went in and came out and rested and went to bed.

> But some days she did rest a little more than on other days.
>
> She did what she could for everybody. (108)

Stein implies that Ida is once again alienated from herself. Her "easy life" of "rest" suggests passivity and tedium rather than a sense of peace, something that I think Ida finally achieves at the end of the novel. Furthermore, because Ida is "lost," her restlessness indicates an inability to obtain a bodily and subjective centre. She has gone from one extreme of existing only in herself to the other of existing only for others.

As the "locality" through which we access the world and the world in turn "accesses" and finalizes us, the body sustains a sense of coherence for the self (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology* 351). For Grosz, as for Merleau-Ponty, the body is the vehicle by which the meaning of others becomes intelligible to us through an elemental corporeal reality. It forms the basis of our abilities to recognize similarities with and dissymmetry from others and affords an intersubjective moment that is not simply a "screen masking the fundamental *impossibility*" of the Real, a fantasy and desire for the "trans-ideological kernel" that I prize as uniquely me, making me uniquely human (Žižek 20, 21).[48] Rather, Grosz insists that understanding subjectivity through the body gives us a means of exploring "the social inscription of bodily processes" (i.e., ideology) without resorting to "a notion of desire as lack, an absence that strives to be filled through the attainment of an impossible object" (Grosz, *Volatile* 27, 165). For Grosz, bodily surface, flesh, is "reflexive" because when it is touched or seen, "the subject is implicated in its objects and its objects are at least partially constitutive of the subject," and, consequently, the body is perpetually renewing its phenomenological and symbolic horizon (*Volatile* 100-101).

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[48] Furthermore, Žižek notes that the idea of the kernel is complicit with ideology because it sustains the systems regulating our lives; this kernel gives us an illusion of free choice that pacifies but does not liberate us. Žižek advocates sticking to the "letter of Law," or, the literal expression, over the implicit utterances which give the illusion but not the actual approbation of free choice (29).

Like Grosz, Claire Colebrooke contends that the body is "not a pre-representational ground, but an effect of representation that passes itself off as grounding . . . . Nevertheless, while the body may only be referred to through discourse or representation, it possesses a force and being that marks the very character of representation" (76). Colebrook also argues that "The body is not a privileged lever for the disruption of representational closure, for representation's own logic (as re-presentation) demands that any 'presence' is never given immediately but only as present" (82). We can surmise, then, that the body does not afford a pre-social subjectivity. Rather, it enfolds all the limits and excesses of discursive representations and just as neatly moves in and out of these limits.

While Stein's representation of the subject is not so much focused on delineating the sensual and raw experience of the body, she suggests that the body is never inert, never desensitized to objects in the world. In this manner, we can read Stein with the overlay of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy. Particularly, in "The Spatiality of One's Own Body and Motility," Merleau-Ponty speaks eloquently about the body that is always responding to the existence of things in the world. He denies that the body can be thought of as an "in-itself" or the ultimate ground for meaning because "In order that we may be able to move our body towards an object, the object must first exist for it" (*Phenomenology* 139). In other words, objects of the world permeate the body, and so the body directs itself towards an object or idea.

Stein's representation of Ida's development is directed towards the possibility of tranquility or "rest" for the heroine. In the first half of the novel, "Ida was always ready to wait but there was nothing to wait for here and she went away" (47). In contrast, in the second half of the novel, Ida spends much of her time "resting" because she had Andrew and "What she really wanted was Andrew" (108). Though Ida finds "Andrew was difficult to suit and so Ida did not suit him. But Ida did sit down beside him," she continues to co-exist with him (108). Thus, while her peripatetic lifestyle indicates a restlessness suggestive of a body that is unable to assimilate or invest itself in the world, Ida's desire to "rest" speaks to a settling of things inside, to paraphrase Stein's description of the act of writing.[49]

Toward the end of her career, the idea of movement occupies Stein's mind. In "Portraits and Repetition," she wonders "if it were possible that a movement were lively enough it would exist so completely that it would not be necessary to see it moving against anything to know that it is moving" (102). This idea leads her to query "if it is necessary to stand still to live, and if it is if that is not perhaps a new way to write a novel" (103). Stein's speculation marks a discernible shift from the story of Melanctha Herbert in *Three Lives*. In contrast to Melanctha's perpetual "wandering," which eventually destroys her, Ida learns to embrace the "liveliness" of staying still, of staying herself. After deciding that "She no longer even needed a twin," Ida moves from place to place performing "favors" for people (43, 68). She even enters into politics, even though "it was not really politics that Ida knew. It was not politics it was favors, that is what Ida liked to do" (74). However, while she seems to become a part of the social machinery, she remains centrally herself because "When anybody needed Ida Ida was resting. That is all right that is the way Ida was needed" (73).

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[49] Stein asserts in "What is English Literature" that "all this as you have it inside you settles something it settles what you have when you write anything, it settles what you complete if you complete anything" (41).

Cynthia Secor concludes that "the totality of the novel is the entity of Ida" (103). Secor's observation is both strange and astute because while it sidesteps many of the paradoxes of Stein's representation of the heroine, it sums up the novel perfectly. By employing the term entity,[50] Secor suggests that the novel and the character mirror one another in their singularities, and neither conforms to thematic and linguistic conventions. Allegra Stewart argues that "entity" represents a singularity so essential that it reaches social markers such as sex and economic class and reaches universality (39).

When Ida meets Andrew, her perfect match, because "He was completely one of two that he was two," Ida thinks that "It was the first thing Ida had ever known really the first thing" (87). Ida and Andrew are suited because they understand one another's dissymmetry, an understanding that is fundamental to respecting the alterity of the other. This can only happen once the subject cognizes its own singularity as co-existent with other singularities in the world. Merleau-Ponty argues that "when I contemplate an object with the sole intention of watching it exist and unfold its riches before my eyes, then it ceases to be an allusion to a general type" (*Phenomenology* 43). What enables an intersubjective equality is the recognition that every *body* is "capably of the same intentions" because between "my consciousness and my body as I experience it, between this phenomenal body of mine and that of another as I see it from the outside, there exists an internal relation which causes the other to appear as *the completion* of the system" (*Phenomenology* 353 [italics mine]). Thus, the subject's "intentionality" is not a personal willfulness but, rather, a recognition that the world is present "before being posited by knowledge in a specific act of identification" (*Phenomenology* xvii). The subject is also left to "discover[…] and enjoy[…] his own nature as spontaneously in harmony with the law of the understanding" (*Phenomenology* xvii).

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[50] Entity is for Stein a thing akin to the human mind and masterpieces: immediate, singular, and unconstrained by time, history, and social politics.

The second half of *Ida*, then, stages Ida's enjoyment of her nature. Ida realizes that "it was all to do over again, Ida had Andrew that is she had that he walked every day," and she contentedly lets go of her need to possess the other (96). Moreover, her relationship with Andrew is left open-ended so that "Ida was almost married to Andrew and not anybody could cloud it. It was very important that she was almost married to Andrew" (111). This insistence on the word "almost" refuses to constrain or fix Ida and Andrew's relationship. In addition, this modifier re-affirms a conviction that Ida had as a child, that "a husband meant marriage and marriage meant changes and changes meant names and after all she had so many changes" (16).

When Andrew makes his appearance at the end of the first half of the novel, he and Ida do not immediately have a meaningful, life-changing epiphany but "Ida somehow knew who Andrew was and leave it alone or not Ida saw him" (87). Moreover, Andrew, "If he saw her or not it was not interesting. Andrew was not a man who ever noticed anything" (87). Stein downgrades their meeting to a non-event and neutralizes the drama of their first meeting. Instead, she builds-up their mutual acknowledgement slowly, impersonally through statements like "Andrew did not notice Ida" and "This had nothing to do with Ida" (88, 89). The diffusion of fraught tensions and symbolic clashes that conventionally accompany the first meeting of two lovers produces the individual characters as individuals first and foremost. And although this is a turning point in Ida's relationship to the world, a relationship once characterized by a deep antipathy or fear of the outside, social world, Ida is atypically untransformed by the incident. She remains herself and not transformed into *the female part* of the heterosexual pairing.

Andrew, too, is free from the strictures of masculinity. He, as much as Ida, does what he pleases and "could walk and come to see Ida and tell her what he did while he was walking and later Ida could walk and come back and not tell Andrew that she had been walking" (96). Ida and Andrew enjoy doing the same activities but they act independently of one another, independently of ideological expectations, and so "Ida was left alone, and she began to sit" (96). When not "resting," walking is Ida and Andrew's main activity, and "anybody can take walks and anybody can meet somebody new" (96). Though she and Andrew did not walk together, "she always walked with some one as if they had walked together any day" (96). In walking, Ida and Andrew form provisional bonds with people that do not overwhelm their senses of themselves.

They are also not invested in consuming one another or imposing one will over the other. Ida is not simply content to be identified by her relationship with Andrew and "she said to herself what am I doing, I have my genius and I am looking for Andrew" (93). However, she "went on looking for Andrew" by her own volition because "he was Andrew the first. All the others had been others" (93, 111). Andrew's uniqueness is highlighted by the fact that Ida repeatedly uses his name and submits to being a name herself: "Ida was not only Ida she was Andrew's Ida and being Andrew's Ida Ida was more than Ida she was Ida itself" (90). As Ida turns into an "itself," an essence that is fluid and porous, she achieves a total unification of self, other, and world that defies gendered myths.

Ida and Andrew perform their respective activities in what Merleau-Ponty would call a "perpetual incarnation" (*Phenomenology* 166). For Merleau-Ponty, the movement "towards an object" signifies that the body cannot "belong to the realm of the 'in-itself'" (*Phenomenology* 139). In other words, purposeful action not only unifies the body and the self but also brings the subject into a unification with the world. Merleau-Ponty argues that "Neither body *nor existence* can be regarded as the original of the human being, since they presuppose each other [...] and because the body is solidified or generalized existence, and existence a perpetual incarnation" (*Phenomenology* 166). When Ida is not "out walking," Ida dreams and thinks "about her life with dogs," but this only makes her "cry" because it is a retreat into memory (96, 107). At this point, the narrator observes, "They had lost her. Ida was gone" (107). However, she "came back to life exactly the day before yesterday" and "Her life never began again because it was always there " (108, 118). In other words, Stein denotes that Ida transmutes the "essence" of herself, killing it off in order to re-invent it.

Because she is "settled" into her own nature, she feels "soothed" instead of excited or nervous by conversations about apple trees, soldiers, shepherd dogs, and lilies-of-the-valley (129, 116-7). She also realizes that preparation that had been done for a wedding is suitable for a funeral when "the telephone rang and it said Andrew was dying, he had not been killed he was only dying, and Ida knew the food would do for the people who came to the funeral and the car would do to go to the funeral and the clothes would not do dear me no they would not do and all this was just dreaming" (111). Dreaming becomes a means of manufacturing possible realities. In putting dreams and fantasies to pragmatic use, Ida inhabits the full horizon of expectations and possibilities and is able to conceptualize a broader order of things. For example, though she attributes the belief in superstitions as belonging to sailors, farmers and actors, she still believes that "the first of anything is a sign" and Andrew "is a sign" (119, 120).

Andrew, too, enjoys stories of luck and urges a man to relay superstitions about spiders, cuckoos singing, goldfish, and dwarfs. However, when the stories degenerate into an almost hysterical battle, with the dwarf claiming that "Misfortune is female and good luck luck is male," the fish shrieking, "the only thing I believe in besides myself is a shoe on a table," the cuckoo declaring, "you poor fish . . . I do not believe in you no fish no, I believe in me," and the spider screaming, "You do not believe in me. . . . I believe in me I am all there is to see except well if you put your clothes on wrong side . . . ," Ida, unlike Andrew, abstains from embracing these "signs" (126, 127). Here, Stein seems to differentiate Ida from Andrew. Her silence with regard to the dwarf's pejorative statement about females as well as the hysterical assertions of "I, I, I" from the goldfish, cuckoo, and spider implies an uneasiness, once again, about identity and its social hysteria (127).[51] Ida's silence is not a regressive or passive withdrawal but an implacable defense against Andrew's excitement because when he looks over at her, "that was that" (128). Here, her silence speaks eloquently about the social values taught by the superstitious tales.

"Little by little" Ida's life continues and "There was never any beginning or end, but every day came before or after another day" (136, 133). Ida awaits oblivion, an oblivion that would transform gender, identity, and genealogical legacy into discursive nothingness, because "When something happens nothing begins. When anything begins then nothing happens and you could always say with Ida that nothing began. Nothing ever did begin" (149). Moreover, the more Ida reaches for abstractness and "return[s] more and more to be Ida," the more everyone is "excited" (146, 147). Instead of the constant progression of things succeeding one another, one after another, making no "difference," Ida "rested" because "nothing happened and nothing began" (150, 151). Ida and the world just *are.* In passages like "one day, she saw a star it was an uncommonly large one and when it set it made a cross, she looked and looked and she and [sic] did not hear Andrew take a walk and that was natural enough she was not there," Stein reveals that the totality of Ida is her absorption with the external world (107). And, furthermore, this absorption is a manner of saying "yes," a decision to embrace her self and her world as a plenitude rather than a lack. Thus, the idea of non-exchangeability gives rise to an alternative model of existing in the world, in oneself, and with others.

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[51] In *The Geographical History of America*, Stein also makes the connection between the cuckoo and money, though without the same consequence as in *Ida*.

## *Conclusion: "Teach them Disobedience"*

On August 6, 1945, Stein published an article in *Life* magazine titled "Off We All Went to See Germany." After Germany's surrender, a group of America soldiers stationed at Culoz invited Stein and Toklas on a field trip to see Hitler's house in Berchtesgaden (Stendhal 251). Reporting on the experience of sitting in folding-chairs on Hitler's balcony with the GIs drinking and laughing, pointing at things in the distance, Stein remarks that it was strangely "normal," presciently calling to mind Arendt's dictum of the "banality of evil." In the same article, Stein writes that when asked by General Osborne about "educating" the German people, she advocated the necessity of teaching every German child that "it is its duty at least once a day to do its good deed and not believe something its father or its teacher tells them, confuse their minds, get their minds confused and perhaps then they will be disobedient" (cited in Stendhal 246). Moreover, for Stein, disobedience guarantees peace because disobedient people are thinkers and they refuse to be "ordered about by a bad man" (cited in Stendhal 246). Her idea was overruled, of course, but it registers Stein's belief in effecting change at the level of the individual so that there is not a collective unconsciousness suturing up atrocities and making them "normal." Both these events, for me, symbolize Stein's conviction about the necessity of re-thinking the conditions of subjectivity in order to re-constitute ideological and social principles.

In her work, Stein struggles with the possibility of neutralizing social discourse, of establishing an anti-subject as the first step toward an aesthetics of intellectual and subjective disobedience. She rejects ready-made classifications and symbolic orderings of gendered identities and she, instead, espouses a belief that individual subjects negotiate alternative worlds in which they are neither strictly free nor entirely ideological pawns. By exploiting ambiguities of language and generic conventions, Stein delays the literary and ideological appropriation of the subject; what remains of the subject in her later work is simply an outline, a frame that the self then completes through its interaction with others and with the world.

Stein's ideal subject is always elsewhere, to rework Derrida's idea about the impossibility of accessing the centre. Speaking about the condition of systems, Derrida states that the centre of the structure escapes "structurality," or schematization, because the centre of totality is always "elsewhere" ("Structure" 279). That is, the centre is always an excess, an outlaw, that cannot be appropriated by social systems. Similarly, for Stein, though subjects are in dialogue with one another and with the discursive structures of their world, they are "elsewhere."

However, the problem gets to be, how can there be an intersubjective model when the subject is perpetually deferred? Intersubjectivity tells us what we are to others and what others are to us. When Stein displaces social subject-positions as the criteria for the self, she also alters the nature of intersubjective relations. Intersubjective engagements become moments of discovery, rather than moments of symbolic affirmation. In any exchange with an "other," the subject must re-negotiate its position as well as its "knowledge." In addition, the subject must relearn to read the practical and conceptual competence of other lived bodies, just as the characters of *Ida* have to (re)negotiate their shared and individual horizons. And, as Cope argues, "what happens between a perceiver and an object is not something which rests in either the perceiver or the object, but is, rather, negotiated between the two" (*Passionate* 19). In other words, subject and object become nodal points in the horizon.

Like Cope, I would like to argue for an intersubjective framework that moves away from the absolutism of individuality and the politics of the personal subject. This can be done by positioning the subject against a larger hermeneutical and phenomenological breadth that Stein achieves in *The Geographical History of America* and *Ida*. According to Merleau-Ponty, phenomenology attempts to put "essences back into existence, and does not expect to arrive at an understanding of man and the world from any other starting point other than that of their 'facticity'" (*Phenomenology* vii). Robert Burch points out that the idea of essence or origins in phenomenology concerns the necessity of "deciphering the 'origins' of things in *the whole system of experience*" in order to explain the "intelligibility" of lived experience (192 [italics mine]). Burch also asserts that "phenomenology does not simply iterate what is already given and understood in lived experience in the way that it is lived and understood. It seeks a transcending theoretical understanding that goes beyond lived experience to situate it, to judge it, to comprehend it, endowing lived experience with new meaning" (190). The practice of phenomenological theorizing, then, requires a vigilant balancing of what Burch calls the "two 'moments'" in phenomenology: lived experience and the theoretical explanation of lived experience (189). This is seen, I think, in Stein's representation of human nature and the human mind in *The Geographical History of America*, where the two temporalities of daily living and "entity" are held in balance; and, they work together to form the shape of the subject.

By arguing that motility and sexual desire are both "original intentionalit[ies]," which both give the subject a sense of synthesis and a "degree of vitality and fruitfulness," Merleau-Ponty allows us to see lived bodies as a site of divergence and convergence with others (*Phenomenology* 137, 157). Though the self is discontinuous, even "distant" from itself at different moments of being, it achieves concretization through bodily performance.[52] (My body implicates other bodies just as I am implicated by others.) Thus, despite the fact that the subject is deferred, it still adheres to the world in this important way.

This inherence is a fundamental element of subjectivity. While our bodily "facticity" is an essential aspect of the singularity of our experiences, it is also the basis of our knowledge of others. The subject's unique sentiments, superstitious beliefs, and psychic life enable it to resist totalizing schematics and also to passionately embrace its corporeality. Its materiality establishes both a *difference* as well as a *pact* with the other.[53] Thus, the facticity of lived experience is a site of an essential dissymmetry that nevertheless affords the possibility of constructing a non-totalitarian intersubjectivity. The recognition of a radical dissymmetry between subjects permits an approach to understanding, both in the sense of comprehension and empathy, that breaches the security of the Absolute subject. This idea helps to explain Stein's seemingly paradoxical equation that the "one" is equivalent to the "everyone." In *Everybody's Autobiography* and early portraits such as "Picasso" and "Orta or One Dancing," the confluence between the singular self and the undifferentiated everyone is always momentary and ruptured by the essential asymmetry of individual and corporeal existences.

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[52] Those who lack motility or sexual drives lack the capacity to interact with others. See the case study of Schneider, a patient unable to act with directionality, as an example of the problems associated with the inability to relate to others (*Phenomenology* 103 *passim*).

However, some feminists argue that there is no way to get beyond the asymmetry between the sexes. Irigaray writes:

> Between man and woman, there really is otherness: biological, morphological, relational. To be able to have a child constitutes a difference, but also being born a girl or a boy of a woman, who is of the same or the other gender as oneself, as well as to be or to appear corporeally with differing properties and qualities. Some of our prosperous or naive contemporaries, women and men, would like to wipe out this difference by resorting to monosexuality, to the unisex and to what is called identification: even if I am bodily a man or woman, I can identify

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[53] The textual body, too, inhabits this duality of divergence and convergence.

> with, and so be, the other sex. This new opium of the people annihilates the other in the illusion of a reduction to identity, equality and sameness, especially between man and woman, the ultimate anchorage of real alterity. *The dream of dissolving material, corporeal or social identity leads to a whole set of delusions*, to endless and unresolvable conflicts, to a war of images or reflections and to powers being accredited to somebody or other more for imaginary or narcissistic reasons than for their actual abilities. (*ILTY* 61-62 [italics mine])

For Irigaray, sexual difference is an essential and universal aspect for everyone, and it must be contended with as a fundamental boundary in order to allow for a different conception of female subjectivity, one that is not reduced to the masculine norm (*ILTY* 39, 50-52).[54]

In arguing for a destabilization of the ideological foundations of the subject, I have no desire to eradicate the material conditions of the subject. What I do want to retain is the possibility of freeing ourselves from the gender paradigm. I recognize the problem of this approach as one that leaves the sexed or raced subject to being forgotten or co-opted. For example, Grosz argues that forms of egalitarian feminisms wishing to establish women as equal to men face the problem of co-option, in that "the struggles of women against patriarchy are too easily identified with a movement of reaction against a general 'dehumanization' in which men may unproblematically represent women in struggles for greater or more authentic forms of humanity" ("Sexual Difference" 89-90). However, if there is a concomitant radicalization of social values and of the explanatory power of the original, this is avoidable. By obliterating these "basic" categories of sex antagonism, as Stein does in her later works, there is the chance of comprehensive transformations through continually reworked coalitions. Grosz also suggests, "sexual difference is not a problematic of independently existing sexual identities; it is a problem concerning a constitutive interval between the sexes that remains unbridgeable by experience or knowledge" (*Volatile* 208). In other words, if we think of sexed bodies as modalities in a horizon, we avoid the trap Irigaray identifies as that of "saming," or collapsing one experience into another, while still retaining the grounds for speaking about intersubjectivity.

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[54] Others like Butler have contested this argument because its re-iterates heterosexuality as the norm. See Pheng Cheah's "The Future of Sexual Difference: An Interview with Judith Butler and Drucilla Cornell" (*Diacritics* 28: 1 (1998): 19-42).

As I have argued, Stein's repudiation of history and identity produces an alternative model of sociality that is anti-hierarchical and non-reductive. According to Stimpson, Stein's hostility against communism, revolution, and Roosevelt's New Deal was based on a rejection of their "anti-democratic and anti-individualistic" implications (in Rosten et al. 11). In fact, Stimpson declares that Stein favours anarchism because it resists alls forms of organization (in Rosten et al. 12). Similarly, Steiner argues that Stein leveled value-systems and proposed to overcome "a hierarchical set of perceptual and ideological assumptions about meaning" (in Rosten et al. 14). Bucknell also argues that Stein struggles with the problem of knowledge and, in maintaining an impossible interface between the chaotic sensory plenitude of the world and language, Stein's creative process "is part of the creation of the world, of the space of time, of the time of space" (164). These analyses point out Stein's investment in destroying the conditions for domination and subjection.

If we shift from a totalitarian impulse to dominate the object and what is external to us, we create a "conversational community" that overturns the antagonism between subject and object (Gadamer 368). Starting from the position that hierarchical structures are absurd, Stein often renders absolute truth impossible. In "Pink Melon Joy," the speaker notes that "facts of life make literature," but the piece ends with a re-iteration of the impossibility of retaining "facts," especially in times of war: "I did not remember the mother was in Paris but you did" (324-5). Here, facts take on a sense of collaboration and memory becomes an epoxy between the "I" of the past and the "I" of the present. The different embodiments and corporeal expressions of the same "I" and the same embodiments and corporeal expressions of different "I"s in a collaborative, intersubjective experience undermine the authority of the original and of fixed truths. This denies the importance of the original.

For Derrida, there can be no origin, because the idea of an origin is always predicated on the presence of the subject (*Speech* 138). In *Speech and Phenomena*, Derrida rejects Husserl's search for a transcendental phenomenology as a repetition of "being as *presence*: the absolute proximity of self-identity, the being-in-front of the object available for repetition, the maintenance of the temporal present, whose ideal form is the self-presence of transcendental *life*," which reaffirms the subject as the origin or source for all meaning (99). Instead, he argues that there can only be *the trace*, which "is not a presence but is rather the simulacrum of presence that dislocates, displaces, and refers beyond itself. The trace has, properly speaking, no place, for effacement belongs to the very structure of the trace . . . . The effacing of this early traces . . . of difference is therefore 'the same' as its tracing within the text of metaphysics" (*Speech* 156). Derrida's attempt to displace the subject permanently speaks to an epistemological desire to defer the subject as guarantor of truth and knowledge.

In her time, Stein was not alone in wanting to empty the subject of ideological markers and to deny its centrality. Nietzsche, most notably, scathingly attacks the premise that the subject is the basis for all meaning in *The Will to Power* (12, 34, 43, 45, 107, 215, 228). He judges that "*innumerable individuals are sacrificed for the sake of a few*, in order to make the few possible.—One must not allow one's self to be deceived; the case is the same with *peoples* and *races*: they produce the 'body' for the generation of isolated and valuable *individuals*, who continue the great process" (153). In a similar vein, Benjamin, in "On the Program of the Coming Philosophy," states that "The task of a future epistemology is to find for knowledge the sphere of total neutrality in regards to concepts of both subject and object; in other words, it is to discover the autonomous, innate sphere of knowledge in which this conception in no way continues to designate the relation between two metaphysical entities" (104).

Warwick Mules thus argues that Benjamin desires "to break down the relation between subject and object that has led to the ossification of experience in fixed modes of life, in order to develop theoretical thinking that grasps the world as an undivided whole" (75).

However, while Nietzsche can categorically proclaim that the subjective "'ego' oppresses and kills," Stein must retain a trace of essence and singularity, though fleeting and discontinuous, in order to countermand the threat of total obliteration for subjects that are already highly threatened by discursive regimes (*Will* 215). The Steinian subject absents itself in order to be more fully itself and more true to itself. It embraces its fragmentations and multiplicity as a pre-condition of its entry into the social world. In creating literary "landscapes," Stein frames particular moments of being as moments of singularity, or irreversibility. Ultimately, the question of a radical dissymmetry or a radical democracy, which is also a radical individualism, is simultaneously about knowledge and about the self. In this sense, Stein is an astute theorist of difference. She stresses microscopic and fundamental differences and enacts a phenomenological reduction without holding out hope for transcendental recuperation (Bucknell 172).

Burch's description of phenomenological practice might be useful for understanding the formation of the Steinian subject: "it cannot be given definitively given in advance but only in and through the actual process of phenomenological theorizing. Indeed, as it proceeds to disclose its subject matter essentially, phenomenology must necessarily appropriate and reappropriate its own beginning and the previous course of its thought" (191). This statement could be convincingly rewritten to define the Steinian subject as that which cannot be predicted in advance but only in and through an inter-connected process of writing, reading, interpreting, collaborating and living with the text. In other words, the Steinian subject must be rethought again and again because it refuses critical and epistemological closure.

This project to reconcile the subject as both singular and open-to-the-world is borne out as fruitful in the works of many contemporary writers interested in the inter-connectednes of language and subjectivity. Practitioners associated with the journal *L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E* and poets whose works are "language-centred" trace their work back to Stein: Charles Bernstein, one of the founders of *L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E*, follows in poetic practice and in theory Stein's attitude that "language is valued for itself" (in Rosten et al. 24); collaborations between Carla Harryman and Lyn Hejinian in *The Wide Road* amplify Stein's concerns with splitting and doubling; lesbian writers like Gail Scott and Nicole Brossard weave Steinian ideas and references into their own writing about the erotic; and playwrights like Richard Foreman and Al Carmines employ Stein's concepts of performativity and space in their works. These writers bear witness to Stein's legacy and the integrity of her vision.

Particularly, Lyn Hejinian's *My Life in the Nineties* resonates clearly with Stein's work, for both authors are concerned with "in time meditation and out of time narration" (Hejinian 10). Hejinian's work argues that the imaginary is a solace where the mind can "avoid having to recognize our utter separateness from each other," a separatedness that sustains the uniqueness of the subject. Hejinian also takes up Stein's affirmation of the dissymmetry between beings, a dissymmetry that means that "Being a woman isn't a condition so much as it's a motivation, with momentum, occurring at various velocities and with diverse trajectories" (Hejinian 12).

Both *My Life in the Nineties* and *The Wide Road* undo gendered identities, calling instead for an "unboundedness" (*Wide Road* 61; *My Life* 31). This "unboundedness" is suggestively "female" in *The Wide Road*: "is it true that what we write of [i.e. desire] is engendered by the tenacious impulse to possess, consume, absorb fluidly and indiscriminately and thus confirm or register what has been noted men most fear in women? In other words, their encompassing unboundedness?" (61). In *My Life in the Nineties*, Hejinian troubles this gendering of language and desire by casually noting that the speaker has both a husband and a wife: "my husband was currently using a red soft toothbrush and my wife shaves her legs" (13).

From Stein, Hejinian also seems to take the idea of an impersonal subjectivity, because it is "not you yourself but your life that deserves attention" (17). This means that there is "no guarantee that the communicability of your femininity . . . will be admired" (17). The speaker of Hejinian's text feels "abstracted, severed from both the material and the symbolic orders" (18). But she also desires to be "impersonal" as the wind, "a name without a referent, an unlinked phrase" that "coincides only with itself" (25). Not only that, the speaker calls for "unbounded identity and geographical fluidity" (31). Stein herself is mentioned as a reference point for James: "As Gertrude Stein's one time mentor William James observed, this [life] is 'where things happen'" (66). Hejinian assumes that Stein is the authoritative figure against which James's statement can be oriented.

Like Hejinian, Harryette Mullen and Leslie Scalapino also take up and incorporate Stein's poetics, especially *Tender Buttons*, into their own works in order to explore "the connections between the symbolic domain of language and the subjective experience of sensuality" (Frost, "Signifying"). For Frost, these contemporary poets fuse together "the language of the public spheres of the street and the marketplace with the experiences of intimacy and the erotic" in order to assert a more vocal politics (Frost, "Signifying"). And though Mullen's *Trimmings* borrows directly from *Tender Buttons* both in terms of theme and style, Mullen's linguistic experiments register a broader social and political resonance (Frost, "Signifying").

While Stein does neglect politics in general, relegating it to the inferior domain of social, collective output, she does express a critique of ideology in pieces like "Patriarchal Poetry" (1927). This piece, I think, is highly political for its explicit treatment of patrilineal inheritances. Stein identifies the threat that women's reproductive abilities pose to patriarchy:

> Make it a mistake . . . . Very slowly I know what it is it is on the one side a to be her to be his to be their to be in an and to be I know what it is it is he who was an known not known was he was he at first it was the grandfather then it was not that in that the father not of that grandfather and then she to be to be sure to be sire to be I know to be sure to be sure correctly saying to be sire to be that. It was that. She was right. It was that./ Patriarchal poetry. ("Patriarchal Poetry" 124).

This discussion of genealogy, which ends with "*she* was right," and its ironic refrain of "to be" and "to be sure," portrays the uncertainty of patrilineal bloodlines.

In a later passage of the poem, Stein writes, "Patriarchal poetry may be mistaken may be undivided may be usefully to be sure settled and they would be after a while as establish in relatively understanding a promise of not in time but at a time wholly reconciled to feel that as well by an instance of escaped interrelated choice. That makes it even" (125). The sense that "patriarchal poetry makes mistakes," conjoined with the cheeky question of identity and paternity, "the baby is who," prophesizes "Patriarchal Poetry in pieces" (132-133).

Patriarchy must rely on hierarchies and rigid dichotomies in order to clearly delineate legitimate versus non-legitimate power. It ominously "adds" to itself and continually appropriates people and things (123, 125). Through assertions and evaluations of differences between objects, i.e. a fig and an apple, or Elizabeth and Edith, Stein suggests that patriarchy also establishes symbolic and literal laws that *order* the world for us, both in the sense of a command as well as a sequence in which "one comes before the other" (128). And, if "sentencing" people is what patriarchal poetry sets out to do, Stein sets out to accomplish the exact opposite, that is, to level ideological hierarchies by understanding things as contiguous, or "next to next or once or twice this shows it all" (123, 129).

This challenge to the idea of a symbolic "sentencing" is reiterated in "Photograph A Five Act Play." Stein protests, "I do hate sentences. I sentence him to have a little rebellion. Why should the public rebel. Why should a stove be known. A stove is known by its name" (349). A photograph is also connected to issues of reproduction, which Stein playfully deconstructs: "a photograph of a number of people if each one of them is reproduced if two have a baby if both the babies are boys what is the name of the street" ("Photograph A Five Act Play" 346). Thus, while DeKoven insists that "Patriarchal Poetry" "reaches us as a blank tedium," offering us none of the linguistic joys or *eros* of "Susie Asado" or "Pink Melon Joy," I am convinced that Stein's poem creates a self carefully negotiating a space for the self and knowledge (*A Different* 128).

Stein's influence reveals the appeal and prescience of both her ontological and epistemological positions about language and the subject.[55] In the introduction to the proceedings of a four-day "Gertrude Stein Festival" held in

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[55] One of the wonderful things about Stein's writing is its resistance to being duplicated. Parodies of Stein often highlight how un-Steinian they are, and, as a result, further illustrate the difficulty of achieving the Steinian non-referentiality and word play. See Kirk Curnutt's "Parody and Pedagogy: Teaching Style, Voice, and Authorial Intent in the Works of Gertrude Stein" (*College Literature* 23: 2 (June 1996): 1-24).

2001 in New York, Bevya Rosten argues that Stein's "legacy" "not only anticipated contemporary artistic practices but also is mirrored in the shifting cultural concerns associated with 'modern' and 'postmodern' art" (3). Stein has not only freed contemporary poetics from the tyranny of the signifier, she has suggested ways in which we can conceive of the self as corporeal, embodied, simultaneously for another as well as for itself, and "intentional," in the phenomenological sense of being directed towards things in the world.

Not surprisingly, Stein's legacy extends to the theatre. Richard Howard argues that "she is one of the three great instigators of [modern] theatre" because of her treatment of "the human body" (in Rosten et al. 13). Al Carmines, in an enthusiastic confession about his "conversion" to Stein, describes Stein as "a human being without any visible god" who frightened him with the suggestion in her writing that "this world is enough. You don't need Tillich, you don't need Heidegger, you don't need anybody else. This world is enough" (in Rosten et al. 19). Carmines's statement speaks eloquently about the implications of Stein's valorization of the discreet moments of lived bodily and mental experiences that are unfettered by pre-existing codifications and explications.

Richard Foreman also recuperates Stein in his theatrical work. He comments: "I have returned to Gertrude Stein's theoretical writing on literature and the theatre at least twice a year, and continually to ponder, and am troubled, and am led, and ruminate it" (cited in Davy 109). Foreman, in fact, launched a play called *Ida-Eyed* in 1969, an example of the type of theatre that Foreman traced back to Stein: "a theatre that was true to my own mental experiences, that is the world as being pieces of things, awkwardly present for a moment and then either re-presented by consciousness or dropped in favor of some other momentary presentation" (cited in Davy 114). This is similar to Stein's belief that an artist must be true to the theatre of his or her mental and lived experiences:

> clarity is of no importance because nobody listens and nobody knows what you mean no matter what you mean, nor how clearly you mean what you mean. But if you have vitality enough of knowing enough of what you mean, somebody and sometime and sometimes a great many will have to realize that you know what you mean and so they will agree that you mean what you know, what you know you mean, which is as near as anybody can come to understanding any one. (*Four in America* 127-28)

Foreman, Howard, and Carmines do not just reproduce Stein's propensity for a defamiliarized and non-referential aesthetic. They are all, instead, interested in exploring in and through their own skins the concept of the subject put forth by Stein, that is, the idea that the subject is highly singular and open to completion by experience. Foreman describes himself as someone working "in the fields of language and art today" and who is "making the *materiality*, making the *continual present* of art and literature and theatre erupt in our work" (in Rosten et al. 20). Indeed, many participants, particularly those who upheld a Steinian legacy in practice, echoed the theme of the *materiality*, or the solidity, of language as a precious gift bestowed by Stein upon contemporary poetics and theatre because it enabled a move away from language as a vehicle for narrative. On the other hand, Frost contends that "exalt[ing] language to the status of the material object [. . .] participates in disguising the erotic 'content'" (Frost, "Signifying"). Frost seems to miss the eroticism of word-play or pillow-talk between lovers, and the creation of alternative subjectivities in and through the exchange, the gifting, of intimate words. Because words are taken in, digested, metabolized, and inscribed upon the body, they do not remain strictly private; they inevitably change the nature of the individual.

Out of all of this, what is wondrous for me is the diversity and dissymmetry of these contemporary productions. These poets and dramatists do not simply continue Stein's aesthetic project; rather, they illuminate, respond to, and challenge Stein's conception of the subject, knowledge, and language. Stein's work, despite persistent charges of infantilism and nonsensicality, survives because it compels us to think about the interplay between personal and social forces and desires *as it tries to work out these issues* in complex and sometimes frustrating ways. But, as Stein explains, "when you make a thing, it is so complicated making it that it is bound to be ugly, but those who do it after you they don't have to worry about making it and they can make it pretty" (*The Autobiography* 23).

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